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THE

WIDOW'S TALE:

AND

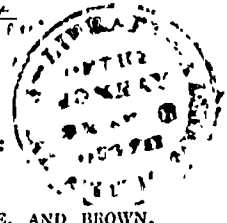
53617

OTHER POEMS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

ELLEN FITZARTHUR.

Mrs. Soc



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THE

WIDOW'S TALE.

The yellow beams of evening light
Down aspen glen were streaming bright:
On either side tall cliffs arose
In their deep shadows of repose,
But catching lights, obliquely glancing,
Touched many a crag's projecting edge,
And many a sun-bright bough was dancing,
Out-starting from its rocky ledge;
And a little stream, from stone to stone,
As it leapt with mirthful music down,
Glittered and gleamed in the slanting ray,
A scattered shower of diamond spray.

Half down one rifted side was seen
A little shelf, a platform green,
A nook of smiling solitude,
Lodged there in Nature's frolic mood.
There many an ash and aspen grey
From rent and fissure forced its way,
And where the bare grey rock peeped throug
Lichens of ev'ry tint and hue
Marbling its sides, and mossy stains
Enseamed their vegetable veins.
The streamlet gushed from that rocky wall,
And close beside its sparkling fall
A little cot, like a martin's nest,
Clung to that lonely place of rest.
The living rock its walls supplied
North, east, and south; the western side
With fragments of the pale grey stone
Was rudely built, whose silv'ry tone
Contrasted with its chaste repose
The hollyhock, and briar-rose.

Beneath the thatch, where woodbines clung,
In wicker-cage a blackbird hung,
And a ceaseless murmur met the ear
From the busy hum of a bee-hive near.
In many a crevice of the rock,
The wall-flower and far-fragrant stock
Sprung up, and ev'ry here and there,
Collected with industrious care,
A little patch of shallow mould
Was gay with flowers; there, spiked with gold
Tall rockets bloomed, and burrage blue,
And pinks, and sweet valerian grew;
There thyme and pennyroyal green,
And balm and marjoram were seen,
And many a herb of virtues known
To rustic pharmacy alone.

A narrow path, like a pale grey thread,
Now lost, now re-appearing, led

Down the craggy steep — the sight was rare
Of human form descending there;
But half way down a trav'ler now
Is gazing on the scene below.
In coarse and tattered garb is he,
And he looks like one returned from sea,
Whose sallow cheek and withered form
Has borne the brunt of sun and storm:
His wallet from his shoulder thrown,
And staff are laid on a jutting stone,
His hat is flung beside them there,
And the light breeze plays with his raven hair.
Perhaps, as on that lowly cot,
He looks, to some resembling spot,
Some glen as lovely and as lone.
Far far away his thoughts are gone,
And fancy, time and space o'erleaping,
Her mem'ry-mingled feast is keeping,
Restoring in that brief survey,
The scenes that long have passed away —

The things that *have been* and *are not* —
His father's home, his native cot,
And the smiling group at its open door
That wont to welcome him of yore.
Brothers and sisters' joyous kiss,
Parental rapture's tearful bliss,
Or bashful childhood, fondly shy,
With curious half-averted eye,
Or, welcome, each, and all above,
The silent clasp of wedded love!
And are they gone? remains there none
Of all the kindred group, not one
To make the pilgrim's heart rebound
"With welcome home's" soul cheering sound?
The language of that glistening eye
Of no expected welcome tells:
The heart that heaves that deep-drawn sigh,
With no sweet hope exulting swells.
That sigh disperses fancy's dream,
As from the mirror of a stream,

A breezy whisper passing by
Sweeps the reflected imagery.
He grasps his oaken staff once more,
And slowly to the cottage-door
Descends the path (half path, half stair)
Thro' brake and bush conducting there. —

Close by the open door is placed
A high-backed wicker-chair — 'tis faced
To the bright sunset — there sits one
Whose eyes towards that setting sun
Are turned in vain — its lustre falls
Unheeded on those sightless balls.
But on the silver hairs that stray
From her plaited coif, the evening ray
Reposes, and with mellow light
Edges the folds of her kerchief white.
That aged matron's chair beside,
A little damsel azure-eyed

And golden haired, sings merrily,
The while her restless fingers ply
The tedious woof of edging fine;
And as across the length'ning line,
With lightning speed the bobbins fly,
The little maid sings merrily.
A moment since, the holy word
Of God, from her youthful voice was heard —
The sacred book of his written will
On the bench at hand lies open still:
Th' allotted evening-portion there
She has read aloud with duteous care,
Impârting to the ear of age,
The comforts of that holy page
That cheers the soul with inward light,
Tho' the dim eyes are sealed in night.
It was a scene might well engage
The soul's best feelings —youth and age —
The youthful voice, entoning clear
Those blessed truths, to Christians dear,

The shrivelled hands, and rayless eyes
To Him who dwelleth in the skies,
Uplifted in the sacrifice
Of prayer and praise — that simple rite,
Accepted incense in His sight,
Whose holy spirit, passing by
The claims of proud sufficiency,
Yet ever near to those who seek,
Dwells with the lowly and the meek

A shadow falls on the cottage-floor,
A stranger stands at the open door —
Weary and poor, his prayer is said
In few, low words — "a crust of bread,
A cup of water" — in the name
Of Jesu asked — that sacred claim
Never by Christian coldly heard,
Is now to Christian hearts preferred,
And so dejected and distressed,
So way-worn looks th' unbidden guest,

Young Agnes' eyes a welcome speak
Before her lips their silence break,
And she turns to tell how faint and pale
The suppliant looks — but his simple tale
To the heart of the blind has found its way,
And with falt'ring tongue she bids him stay,
For his voice has something in its tone,
Like the voice of one that's dead and gone.

How freshly can a sound restore
The things, and scenes that are no more!
A strain of music heard before,
How from oblivion's darkest night,
As with a flash of mental light,
Doth it recall the very place,
The time, each dear familiar face,
Each object that begirt us round,
When last we listened to the sound.
But the magic of a voice! a word!
Uttered in accents long unheard —

As if the grave its silence dread
Dissolved, that thrilling tone we hear,
And all the past comes back again,
To the full heart, the teeming brain.

Agnes has spread the homely fare,
Their evening meal — the grandam's prayer
Of praise and thanksgiving is said
For daily blessings, daily bread,
And freely, for the Giver's sake,
She bids the stranger-guest partake.
But not like one by hunger prest
He shares the meal — a silent guest,
With thoughtful and abstracted air
He sits, and heart-corroding care
Seems lab'ring in the frequent sigh
That heaves his breast unconsciously,
And the dark sadness of his eye
Intently on the youthful face
Of Agnes dwells, as if to trace

A likeness to some face enshrined
In mem'ry's treasure-house, the mind.
She started at the deep, deep sigh
That ended his long scrutiny.
" Oh, grandam dear!" she whispered low,
" Could you but see how full of woe
He looks, how sadly upon me
His eyes are fixed, as used to be
Your own, dear grandam! many a day
Before God took your sight away.
Speak to him, grandmother! his eye
Disturbs me, yet I know not why:
'Tis only mournful, not severe —
Speak some kind words his heart to cheer."

Not only to the ear addressed
That whisper came, the thoughtful guest
Its purport caught, " Alas, dear maid!"
He cried, " too truly hast thou said —

Abideth in our lonely cot,
The comforts of a former lot,
Contrasting with her aspect chill
And homely darkening frown; yet still
I am content — nay *more* — am *blest*.
For, Stranger! this is not my rest.
There is a Sun whose glorious light
Turns into day the darkest night —
There is a hope beyond the tomb —
Beyond the transitory gloom
Of this world's ills. My little maid!
Forgive me — thanklessly I said
That I was childless — but for thee,
Childless and helpless I should be.
Child of my child! bequeathed when he' ——

" 'Child of thy child!' But Robert too
Was married, and a father." — "Who?
Robert thou said'st! and was my son
Known to thee, stranger? art thou one
To whom my other child was known,

My Reuben? He, too, is no more —
And have I seen thy face before?
Before — alas! I had forgot —
I hear thee, but I see thee not —
I hear thee — when my ear first caught
The accents of thy voice, they brought
Strange trouble to my heart — I thought,
But that I know my child is dead,
And fathoms deep above his head
That ocean rolls, I could have said
That voice was his — but tell me now,
When didst thou know us — where and how?"

I knew thy son — the ship that bore
Thy Reuben from his native shore
I sailed in, and I left behind,
Like him, all objects that could bind
The heart to life — so mutual grief
Made us companions, and relief,

And mournful pleasure, 'twas to keep
Our watch at midnight, when deep sleep
Had fallen on others — that calm hour
Was mem'ry's sabbath — and the power
By which she conjured up again
The buried past, more perfect then,
In the still solitude of night,
More clear, than when the garish light
Of day, with all its busy sound
Of human toil and voices, drowned
The inward vision — we communed
(Our hearts like instruments attuned
By kindred sorrows in one key)
Of those we never more should see.
Of those we never might — of thee,
Full oft and tenderly, thy son,
Thy Reuben spake — "There yet is one,
One left in England," he would say,
"Who loves me well — Oh! *she* will pray
For her poor son — and if the day

Should ever come — if God restore
Me to my native land once more —
To that dear parent — it will be
All that of joy remains for me
To comfort her declining years,
With grateful love to dry the tears
Shed for my sorrows." — Thus thy son
Remembered thee in absence — none
Save thee, he said, were left to mourn
His loss, or pray for his return —
Oh! yes — there was a brother too,
Whom he called Robert — well he knew
What int'rest he and his kind mate
Shared in the absent wand'rer's fate —
From broken sentences beside
I gleaned, how sharply God had tried
His heart with sorrow — the last stroke
Was recent, and he seldom spoke
Of that, or of past times — too well
Thou know'st his fate — I need not tell

The story of that day to thee,
Whose issue crowned with victory
The British arms. — Beside thy son,
Stationed with him at the same gun
Had been my post — but when the sea
Thro' ev'ry port-hole suddenly
Came rushing in, we sprang on deck,
Just as the ship, a found'ring wreck,
Went to the bottom — only I
Of all her gallant company
Was saved alive. They had just lower'd
From a French ship (to take on board
Some of their drowning mates) a boat,
Near which it was my chance to float;
So, 'mongst their own, they rescued me,
To pine in long captivity.
For since that day, in France I've lain
A pris'ner languishing in vain,
Year after year, for the release
That never came — till at last, peace

Unbarred our dungeon. — It might be
Mine own impatience to be free
That marred itself — for I had sought
The means (successfully, I thought,)
To escape from thence. — Our prison near,
Dwelt one, who in her heart right dear
Held all from England, which had been
Indeed her birth-place. — She had seen
And marked me, as, with care-worn mien,
I paced the high-walled court around
Beneath her window, and she found
That from the very spot I came,
Her native place, and that my name
Was one that to her ear, in youth,
Had been familiar, for in truth
I was her sister's son — a scene
Of many cares her life had been
Since, in an evil hour, (undone
By fatal confidence in one

Who ill deserved her love,) her home
And country she forsook, to roam
Where'er his wayward fortunes led,
And still more wayward will: — they fled
First to his native land, and there
Abode, till his detected share
In dark offences cast them out
From France for ever — then they sought
Her distant colonies, when he
(Whom naming, she called D'Aubigny)
The wreck of former wealth possessed.
Alas! to her that land of rest
Proved not a land of peace — her breast
Nourished the worm that dieth not —
A spirit self-arraigned — a lot
Uncheered by wedded love was hers,
And so, for many tedious years,
She dragged on life, till fate set free
Her future days, and D'Aubigny
Went to his last account. — Then she,

To whom, tho' late, the sacred name
Of wife was sealed, her widowed claim
Asserting, what was left secured
Of their small substance, and procured
Its secret transfer to the land,
To which, with yearning heart, she planned
Her own return — but then perforce
Th' unquiet times her homeward course
Compelled thro' France, and having gained
Her way thus far, she was detained
By sickness, in the very spot
Where chance (or my appointed lot
I should have said, for God's decree
Directeth all things) guided me.
She framed a project, that in sooth
Promised success, beneath her roof
To shelter me, till we should find
Occasion fair to leave behind
The land of bondage, and once more
Reach England's free and happy shore.

That neighb'ring refuge I attained
With little risk, but fate restrained
My farther progress. She who gave
That present shelter, to the grave
Drew near, and she indulged in vain
The fond hope to behold again,
England, the country of her birth,
And when she died, with its dear earth
To mingle her own dust. Alas!
Life was expending from its glass
The latest sands, and I but came
To close her eyes — a written claim
Dying she gave, that I might share
The little competence her care
Had stored in England, with some there
Dear to us both. " 'T had been," she said,
" Her hope long cherished, to have made
Her peace with those dear friends, but He
Who seeth not as mortals see,

Who cannot err, willed otherwise,
And unto him, the sacrifice
Of a resigned and contrite heart,
She meekly offered up. My part
Concluded in the last sad scene,
I turned my thoughts to what had been
Our project of escape — in vain,
I was discovered, and again
Dragged back to prison, where I found
A change of pris'ners had unbound
The chains of all my countrymen
During my absence — there was then
No hope for me — that dreary tomb
Enclosed me living in its womb,
Till peace at last unbarred the door,
And gave me to behold once more
My native country. — Oh, my God!
When first I stept on its dear sod,
And when a rapid glance of mind
Recalled the day I left behind

Those chalky cliffs — what words can tell
The warring and tumultuous swell
Of mixt emotions, that oppressed,
To agony, my heaving breast!
To what was I returned? — to whom?
Of those I loved, from the cold tomb
Who had been spared to welcome me?
The years of my captivity,
Tedious and sad, had crept away,
And I had longed to see this day,
With an intenseness of desire,
That like a slow consuming fire
Had brought me to the grave's dark brink —
Yet now, I almost wished to shrink
(As 'twere a sanctuary from pain)
Into my dungeon's gloom again,
But soon, that wild, ungoverned mood
Of o'erwrought feeling was subdued
To milder sadness, and I sought
(Preparing as a Christian ought

To bear the worst) the worst to know —
It was indeed a tale of woe,
That I had armed myself to hear,
Of all to whom I had been dear,
Of all whom I had loved, but one
Was left alive — the rest were gone
To their cold graves: those graves alone,
Hard by an ancient dwelling place,
Were the memorials of a race
Once strong and flourishing: our lands
Had passed into a stranger's hands —
A stranger met me at the door
Where kindred faces had before
Been used to greet me. Still, oh! still,
Methinks I feel the icy chill
That moment struck into my heart:
Before I turned me to depart,
I gained directions to the spot,
Yet distant, where a humble cot

To the survivor of our race
Affords a last abiding place.
I go to seek that poor abode;
But to thy dwelling on the road
I turned aside; methought 'twould be
A mournful luxury to thee
With one who saw thy Reuben last
To speak of him, and of the past."

"Kind friend! kind stranger!" faltringly,
Old Alice cried, "God render thee
With int'rest back, thy care for me.
Well didst thou judge; a mother's ear
Can never words so welcome hear:
Such int'rest to a mother's heart
No voice can like his voice impart,
Who of a dear dead child can tell,
The latest words, the last farewell.
Alas! my child so hastily
Was called away, no time had he

To leave a last farewell for me;
Or, if in death's last agony
He breathed my name, the wild waves drowned,
As they rolled over him, the sound.
But stranger, thou who shared his fate
To the last moment, canst relate
A thousand trifles, that to me
Treasures of priceless worth will be.
His words — his feelings — but of those,
As linked with deep and recent woes,
Thou saidst he spake reluctantly;
Then stranger! wilt thou hear from me
Our tale of sorrows? My poor son
The painful subject well might shun:
His heart was bleeding from a wound
Still fresh; but seasons have gone round,
Summers and winters, many a one
Since then, and I whose glass is run

So nearly out, whose hopes are strong
That I shall be restored ere long
To those I love, who are gone on
To our true country — I can find
Calm comfort, when I look behind
On sorrow's dark and gloomy vale —
Say, wilt thou hear the widow's tale?"

The tale of "narrative old age"
Lacked not of int'rest to engage
Attention from the stranger-guest;
But oft as it went on, he pressed
Across his brows (as if he tried
Th' emotions of his soul to hide)
His clasped hands — yet none espied
Save the young Agnes; none were near,
Save her, to mark the large round tear
From his veiled eyes that forced its way.
Thus ran the tale of Alice Grey: —

" Long years of happiness I knew,
A cherished wife: no wedded two
Than James and Alice Grey more blest
In ev'ry worldly interest.
We were not on the summit set
Of life's proud eminence, nor yet
On its mid-height by fortune placed:
Our happier, humbler lot was cast
Just where the hill with gradual swell
Slopes upwards from the lowly dell.
Rich flocks and lands had Grey; but he
Chose an unportioned wife in me.
Nor flocks, nor lands, nor hoarded gold,
My father owned — a village-fold
His only flock — their shepherd he,
The shepherd of their souls, and we
(I and my sisters, we were three)
His only wealth: he called us so,
And so esteemed us; yet to know

His Alice should become the bride
Of good James Grey — that when he died,
God would a shelter so provide
For my two sisters, if unwed,
Gladdened his heart; for then he said,
He should in peace lay down his head
Beside my mother's. He had wept
Her loss untimely, for she slept
Already in the grave, when we
Were infants, tott'ring round his knee.

" Yet in my father's cup remained
Two bitter drops; it was ordained
He should not to our love bequeath
My sisters — we were doomed to grieve
For our dear Elinor, who died,
Sweet creature! in the vernal pride
Of maiden loveliness. The day
That saw her to the house of clay
Borne from amongst us, was a day

Of lamentation, but there came
A darker soon — a day of shame.
'Twas then we proved (how bitterly !)
That when the young and sinless die,
Though heart-wrung are the tears that fall,
Bedewing their untimely pall,
Though long and deep the sad stream flows,
Such tears are balm, compared with those,
The burning, bitter drops we shed
For those who live, and yet are dead
In sin and trespasses — o'er whom
Guilt casts a pall of tenfold gloom.

"My sister Marg'ret, from a child,
Was ever diff'rent from the mild,
Meek Elinor: a spirit high
Had Marg'ret, one that dared defy
Temptation's most alluring shape,
Disdaining from the snare t' escape

By aught but her own strength. She loved
The path of virtue, and she moved
Fearless and radiant on the way,
'Whence souls like hers could never stray;'
But Elinor mistrusted still
Her own best actions, her own will,
Her very thoughts — *herself* alone
Severely questioning. but prone
To charity's indulgent side,
When others' words and deeds were tried.
She could not with the lofty look
Of conscious virtue vice rebuke;
But she could weep, when virtue fell,
And seek repentance in the cell
Of self-abasement, and persuade
Those from the path of life who strayed
To turn and enter it again.
But Marg'ret blamed with high disdain
Her sister's weakness — they deserved,
She said, to suffer, who had swerved —

Vice was to her a hateful thing —
She turned, as from a serpent's sting,
From those who fell, and fallen, no tears
She gave to weakness such as theirs.
She was devout — with fervour prayed —
But not like Elinor, for aid
Against the deep deceitfulness
Of her own heart: such righteousness
Was *his* who in the Temple prayed,
Thanking the Lord that he was made
More just than other men. At length
The trial came, the proof of strength;
Vain was the proud one's lofty boast —
Defying danger, she was lost.
Base arts prevailed — unhappy maid!
By those and her own heart betrayed,
Despairing, from her home she fled,
And we deplored her, worse than dead.

In vain we sought, enquired in vain,
We never could a trace obtain
Of my lost sister.

"From the day
Of that affliction, swift decay
Gained on my father's green old age.
But e'er his mortal pilgrimage
Attained its goal, two sons of mine,
(My only children) with the sign
Of grace he sealed unto the Lord,
Then full of peace and hope restored
His patient spirit up. Our home
When he departed wore a gloom
Long undispelled — for old and young
Loved him alike — the infant-tongue
With its first accents learned to frame
(Lisping it out) his honored name,
And all resorted in their need
To him, and found a friend indeed.

" We trained our sons to venerate
The mem'ry of the dead — our state
Prospered with flourishing increase
Of this world's goods; domestic peace
Abode with us — our children grew
In stature and in wisdom too,
Our noble boys! perhaps undue
And over anxious was our love
Of those dear children, from above
Weaning our hearts, and making *this*,
This world, the centre of their bliss.
We left our sons unbiassed, free
To choose what each in life would be.
Well pleased was I, when Robert's voice
Proclaimed the rural life his choice,
His father's fruitful fields to till,
To share our home and station still;
But to my heart the sound struck cold
When Reuben's plans and hopes were told.
A spirit ardent, active, bold,

A restless and enquiring mind
Were Reuben's — secretly he pined
The perils of their life to share
Who plough the sea in ships, and there
Behold the wonders of the Lord,
His works in the great deep! — A hoard
Of wondrous tales his mem'ry stored
Of wild adventures on the seas,
Achievements and discoveries,
Islands, where shipwrecked seamen thrown,
Had founded kingdoms of their own;
Countries where crystal waters flow
O'er golden sands, where diamonds glow
On walls and pavements, with their rays
Out-sparkling noon's meridian blaze.

"We had a friend (our kinsman he)
Who from his youth up, on the sea
Had been a voyager — on his knee,

When he could spare the leisure time
To visit us, would Reuben climb,
While yet a little one, to hear
Those wondrous tales — all eye, all ear.
With flushing cheek, and lips apart,
With indrawn breath, and beating heart,
He listened, wondered, and believed —
And so, his youthful mind received
The stamp that with his years became
Deeper and deeper, like a name
Carved on a sapling tree, a mark
Expanding with th' expanding bark.
The die was cast: — our child declared
His wish, his choice; and we prepared
Our hearts to part with him: — God knows
What ill suppressed, what bitter throes,
That parting wrung from mine! the day
When a dear child goes first away
From his own home, is one at best
Of sad and solemn interest —

How many thoughts are busy then
In a fond mother's heart! but when
She sends him forth from that safe home
O'er oceans' trackless paths to roam —
T' encounter hardships, dangers, all
The chances that to seamen fall:
Oh! never from that hour she knows
Sweet peace, or undisturbed repose —
She shudders if the rough wind blows:
Or, when 'tis still — 'ev'n now' thinks she,
'Who knows! there may be storms at sea!'
Her waking thoughts, when others sleep,
Are wand'ring, wand'ring o'er the deep —
Or if she sleep, sad dreams fulfil
Her waking auguries of ill: —
They paint him struggling with the wave,
She stretches out her arms to save,
But cannot reach him: — with a cry
That ends that mortal agony
She starts from slumber, yet to lie

Gasping and breathless — 'it may be,'
She thinks, 'a warning sent to me:'
And then she longs, how fearfully!
With sick'ning hope, for news from sea.

"The kinsman I have mentioned, owned
A ship, in frequent traffic bound
To foreign parts: — with him, our son
Made his first voyage — a prosp'rous one —
Speedy and safe it proved, and we,
In little time, right joyfully
Welcom'd our sailor home: — but then
Not long to stay: — the Rose again
Sailed for a foreign port, and bore
Our Reuben from his home once more.
He went; returned: — that second trip
Was long and boist'rous, and the ship
Arrived in port, was laid up there
A battered hull for long repair;

And Reuben (the advent'rous flame
Damped, tho' not quenched within him,) came
Once more amongst us, with a mind,
Far more than heretofore inclined
For patient tarrying; and to bind
His heart to home, e'er long there grew
A tender int'rest.—

" 'Mongst the few
That dwelt around us, was a pair
Of orphan girls — an uncle's care
To them the guardianship supplied
Of tender parents, who had died
When they were infants — I had known
Their mother. — Daughters of my own
Had God denied me, and these two
Like daughters in my bosom grew.
Dear orphans! and it pleased us well,
When Robert's choice, our first-born, fell

On Jane the eldest. — They had been
Six months betrothed, and just nineteen
Was Jane when she became a wife:
A year less forwards Lucy's life,
When home from sea, a welcome guest,
Came Reuben to the marriage-feast.
Brideman and maid, the younger pair,
Reuben and Lucy acted there —
And we looked on, and prophesied
That Lucy soon would be a bride;
And soon she was, for joyfully
We gave consent that she should be
Our Reuben's wife — Oh! who than we
Were happier, when that double tie
Made us one house, one family!
For spacious was our home, and well
Our children were content to dwell
Beneath its shelter. — Thus ran o'er
Our cup with bliss; but I adore

The hand that dashed it from us — Yea,
' The Lord that gave hath ta'en away,
And blessed be his name.'

" While we
All unsuspecting ills to be,
Were lulled in sweet security.
A cloud (a little speck at first)
Was gath'ring o'er our heads, to burst
In hideous ruin : — silent — slow —
Came on the lowering storm of woe.
At first such casualties as all
Who till the ground at times befall,
Fell to our lot — the land of late
Had yielded scanty crops, but great
Was this year's promise — the ripe grain
Waved in our fields — the latter rain
A robe like spring's young green had spread
O'er all the late mown vales, where fed

Our flocks and herds, the chiefest they
Of all our substance — but a day
Drew near of havoc and dismay —
Lord! where is he, the man who knows
That he shall reap the land he sows?
The hail came down, the floods arose,
The river, rushing from its bed,
Up-swoln, o'er all the lowland spread.
There was no help. — Man's hand in vain
Would have been stretched out to restrain
The torrent's fury — so we stood
And gazed on the destroying flood.
Three days the ministers of wrath
Career'd on their triumphant path,
But when up-rose the third day's sun,
Their rage was spent — their work was done —
Oh, Heaven! when that third morning shone,
On what a prospect did we gaze —
The river, by a thousand ways

(Deep gullies furrowed by its force)
Retreating to its former course,
With its dark waters, whirled along
Cows, oxen, sheep, a countless throng:
And barns, and ricks, and trees o'erthrown
(A mingled wreck) were rushing down.
And lo! the fruit of ten years' toil —
Those fertile fields — the very soil
Washed from their surface — mud and sand
Bequeathed instead — on either hand
Fences demolished, prostrate trees
Choking up rivulets — from these
The pathway bridges torn, that crossed
To paths, themselves now choked and lost,
Oh! 'twas a sight of — *not* despair,
For we were Christians! — yet to bear
The trial as became us best,
He only to that painful test
Who brought us, could have giv'n us grace —
He did not turn away his face;

We called on Him in our distress,
And we were not left comfortless.

"Our lands extended far — in vain
Should we have sought to stock again
(Unpeopled thus) such wide domain,
We sold it, purporting to rent
A smaller farm, with which intent,
Till we had time to look around,
And one that suited us was found,
We placed the sum our own had brought
In a friend's hands — safe hands we thought.
A little farm that suited well
Our straight'ned means soon vacant fell:
We called it Zoar; for, we said,
The Lord appointed when we fled
Our refuge here — so we arose.
We and our children, (for they chose
Still to go with us,) we arose

And went to our new home — and soon
Sweet comfort, like the silv'ry moon
When breaking from a stormy sky
She looketh down so peacefully,
The troubled sea's vexed waves caressing,
Sweet comfort and the kindred blessing
Her sister peace, returned once more
To dwell amongst us, as of yore —
Part of our little wealth we spent
To stock the farm; the rest was lent
At int'rest to our friend — a stay
To lean on in a stormy day.

"Short was the halcyon calm — in vain
We sowed that year the fruitful grain:
We found the land exhausted — drained
To barrenness — for us remained
The uphill labour to renew
Its wasted vigour — so we knew
That year our profits must be few.

But strong in patient hope, we bore
The burden of our toil: — 'once o'er,'
We said, 'this barren year, a day
Of future harvest will repay
Our present labour; but, alas!
That harvest never came to pass.
My dear kind husband taxed his strength
Too long, too hardly, till at length
The burden weighed him down — there came
A fever raging through his frame,
With deadly strife — three weeks of dread,
I and his children round his bed
Watched night and day — immediate doom
Was then averted, but the tomb
Shut not her jaws — the dread decree,
The fiat had gone forth, and we
Saw with sad hearts, from day to day,
The father, husband, waste away
In pale consumption's slow decay.

He wondered that his wasted strength
Returned so slowly — but at length
(Dear soul!) he said he should regain
His wonted vigour, and again
Share his son's toils; and then he drew
Schemes for the future — things to do,
'If it pleased God,' next year — and spoke
So cheerfully, it almost broke
Our hearts to hear him, for we knew,
Alas! too well, how short, how few
Would be his days on earth — the pain!
The hard, hard trial to restrain
The anguish of our souls, and smile
Approval of such schemes, the while
We watched life's ebbing flood retire
Wave after wave — and that false fire
That in the sunk eye gleamed so bright:
Oh! how we shuddered at the sight,
And sickened, when the fev'rish blush
Burnt on his cheek with sudden flush.

Yet sometimes (for affection clings
Ev'n like a drowning wretch, to things
That cannot save) in Reason's spite
We almost fancied that false light
Was health's returning flame. So past
The long, long winter, and at last
A hope sprung up in ev'ry breast,
(A hope half whispered, half represt,)
That if he lived till spring — the rest
Looks only uttered — half confined
To looks, that interchange of mind.
He lived till spring — its balmy breath
Was grateful to his soul — and death
His darkest frown withdrew — we cast
Our worst fears from us, for ' 'tis past,
Surely,' we said, the worst is past,
The bitterness of death. One day,
The loveliest of a lovely May,
Its thirtieth morning, my dear Grey

Had risen from slumber, so renewed
In healthful vigour, that subdued
By grateful joy, I wept apart,
And in the fulness of my heart
Gave thanks to God. That day was one
Of twofold joy, for to my son,
My eldest son, a child was born,
His Jane's first pledge. Since early morn
Reuben and he had been away
'Mongst the first hay-crops, and the day
Was now far spent, when they returned
Home from their labour — westward burned
A flood of glory, and its light
Rested on Zoar — where a sight
(Oh, what a sight for Robert !) drew
As they approached the brethren's view
Towards our porch. Their father there
Awaited them, and with an air
Of tender welcome cried, 'My son,
Receive and bless this little one

Whom God hath sent thee — may he be
Thy duteous child, as thou to me
Hast proved from tender infancy,
Ev'n to this day.' So having prayed
With pious fervency, he laid
The babe in Robert's arms. We met,
As was our custom, for the debt
Of daily blessings, to adore
Our heav'nly Father — to implore
That he would give his angels power
To keep in the defenceless hour
Of sleep, their watch around our bed;
Then, from the book of life, we read
Some chance-allotted part. The book
That night fell open where St. Luke
Tells how the blessed virgin brought
Her infant to the Temple, taught
By the Lord's Spirit, that the law
Might be fulfilled; where Simeon saw

And hailed the holy child. Of late
My husband's long enfeebled state
Had made him (though reluctantly)
Unto his children or to me
Yield the priest's office; but that night
We heard again (with what delight
The sound of his loved voice — 'twas low,
But clear and steady, and with slow
And solemn fervour he went through
The part of prayer: the chapter next
Began — but coming to the text,
Where he, the just and the devout,
Beholding Jesus, crieth out
In faith, ' According to thy word,
Now lettest thou thy servant, Lord,
Depart in peace' — just then we found
A tremour in his voice — the sound
Faltered a moment — murmured — stopt —
Then, gently, gradually he dropt

His head, like one by sleep oppressed,
And so, to everlasting rest
His spirit passed away.

"His head
Was scarcely laid in earth's cold bed,
When fortune, that so long had frowned,
With cares and crosses hemmed us round.
The produce of our farm was small;
And sickness, with its heavy call,
Had more than drained the little all —
Rent-day approached — no other way
Was left us, but its claims to pay
From that small store remaining yet
In our friend's hands. We were in debt
And could not choose — it must be done —
So to the neighb'ring town my son,
My Reuben, went with heavy heart,
To claim our little hoard. A mart

Of commerce was that sea-port town,
Where he we trusted carried on
A thriving trade. — So Reuben went,
And spoke, at parting, his intent
To be at home e'er night — but day
Closed in, and still he was away,
And many a thought of anxious dread
Soon crept into his Lucy's head,
In vain, to comfort her, I said,
'Perhaps our friend so warmly pressed,
That Reuben will remain his guest
And sleep to night.' — It would not do —
'Oh, no! she was assured, she knew,
At *such* a time, he would not stay.' —
She was expecting ev'ry day
To be a mother; and I too
Felt, tho' I hid my fears, how true
Was all she said. The night wore on:
Cheerless arose the morrow's dawn;

Then Robert took the town-ward way
To seek his brother — what a day!
Oh! what a day we lingered through;
Our terrors more distracting grew
With ev'ry moment — noon passed o'er,
And neither came — the day once more
Faded to twilight — at the door,
List'ning to ev'ry sound, we stayed,
Straining our sight, to pierce the shade
Of dusky evening — to the ground
If a leaf fell, we thought the sound
A step approaching; if a bough
Waved o'er the winding footpath, Now
(Jane's voice and mine cried out) they come!
But Lucy trembled and was dumb.

"Thus baffled oft, at last we feared
To speak our hopes — but then appeared,
Two human forms, so near, so plain,
We could not be deceived again.

We called, and Robert's voice replied —
Then Lucy, starting from my side,
Rushed on to meet them — Robert tried
(He came the foremost) to restrain
Her flying eagerness. — In vain —
To Reuben's arms she hurried by,
But then we heard a piercing cry,
And when we reached her, there she hung
A dead cold weight; for she had flung
Her arms about the neck of one
Who was not Reuben. — Oh, my son!
Though years since then have passed away,
Ev'n now, as fresh as yesterday,
Thrills through thy mother's heart again
That moment's agonizing pain.

" Soon told was Robert's tale: — he found,
On reaching Leith, 'twas rumoured round
Our friend had failed — that Reuben Grey
Had sought him the preceding day

With fruitless claims, and finding vain
All hope our pittance to regain,
With heavy heart had turned away
Toward Zoar. — In the roads there lay
Two frigates, waiting to complete
Their crews to join a distant fleet —
The press was hot, and in the street
'Twas Reuben's evil chance to meet
Those cruel men. — They saw him wear
A sailor's garb, and some were there
Remembered he had been at sea.
Vain was my poor son's urgent plea
That many looked to him for bread;
'The King must be served first,' they said:
So he was hurried off — and so
Concluded Robert's tale of woe.
But Lucy heard it not — she lay
Long lifeless — pale and cold as clay.
Our neighbour, who had come from town
With Reuben, laid her gently down

(Reaching our cottage) on that bed,
From whence, poor lamb! her gentle head
In life she never raised again —
Yet she awoke to feel the pain
A mother bears so patiently
In heart sustaining hope. But she,
The poor forlorn one, unsustained
By that sweet hope, (for she remained
Unconscious,) could not struggle through
The trying hour, nor ever knew
Its sweet reward, for she expired
Just as the babe, so long desired,
Drew its first breath. — 'Twas like a dream,
All that had passed — a frightful dream!
Still in my ears rang Lucy's scream —
Still her fixt look I seemed to see
Of frenzied, speechless agony.
But now — while all around her wept
Save me (I could not weep), she slept

In such untroubled loveliness,
With face so calm, so passionless,
As if that tumult of distress
Had never been — and could it be?
I asked myself, half doubtingly —
And my poor Reuben! where was he?
Then all the dreadful certainty,
Then first I seemed to comprehend,
Were these the tidings I must send
To cheer his heart? — No soothing friend
Beside him, when the dreadful blow
Fell on him, with its weight of woe —
'Mother! take comfort, I will go
And seek my brother,' Robert cried:
'Still in our roads the frigates ride,
And sure I shall not be denied
Access to Reuben.' — So he went
On his sad errand — but th' intent
Of breaking gradually the pain
To our poor Reuben proved in vain —

Just as he neared the ship, she weighed
Her anchor up, and signal made
Of sailing to the rest — on board
Our Reuben stood, but scarce a word
Passed 'twixt the brethren. — Reuben cried,
As leaning o'er the vessel's side
He grasped his brother's hand, ' What cheer
From home, my brother? are all there
In health and safety? is all well
At Zoar? Is my' —— Lucy well,
He would have said, but his voice fell
Leaving the name unspoken. — ' Well,
Well is thy Lucy, and at rest' —
Faltered out Robert, as he pressed
The hand that grasped so eagerly
His trembling hand — ' God comfort thee!'
Those words told all — they were the last,
Those few sad words, that ever past
Between the brethren. — Robert's look
Had shunned his brother's, while he spoke,

But when he felt the strong, firm grasp
Of Reuben's hand, its hold unclasp,
And his own dropt, a sudden weight —
He raised his eyes (but then too late)
Towards his brother — he was gone.
And while he gazed, the ship sailed on,
And so they parted, never more
To meet again on sea or shore.

" From that day forward, woe on woe
Thickened around us — ev'ry blow
Succeeded by some heavier one.
News came from sea — of my poor son.
Our English squadron had engaged
The fleet of France — the conflict raged
In dread suspense from morn to night —
A summer's day — but England's might
Prevailed in the unequal fight.
Then through the land a shout arose,
' England has triumphed o'er her foes !'

Shudd'ring I heard — alas! to me
It was a dear-bought victory.
The ship where fought my gallant son ——
But stranger! thou who 'scaped alone,
When she with all her crew went down,
Thou know'st too well my Reuben's fate. —
Then I blessed Heaven that his sweet mate,
His Lucy, had been called away
In mercy, e'er that fatal day.
I had no time to mourn — the rod
Was still extended — oh, my God!
Not yet on this devoted head
The vial of thy wrath was shed
To the last drop. Disease and death
Assailed us with contagious breath,—
Soul-chilling want, stern handmaid! pressed
Her cold weight on each youthful breast.
I weathered out the storm; my blood,
Already chilled by age, withstood

The dreadful malady, that proved
Its fatal power on those I loved
Than my own life how dearer far!
Oh, Lord, how dread thy judgments are!
Thy awful dealings set at nought
Man's wisdom — calculation — thought. —
In youth, with hope's precursive gaze,
Forward he looks to length of days —
The aged know their time must be
Just verging on eternity —
Yet oft, beyond the age of man,
God lengthens that exhausted span,
And cuts the thread, whose strength appears
To promise long extended years —
So spares the lightning some old oak,
Withered and bare, to spend its stroke
On the young cedar, that on high
Lifts its green branches to the sky.
Me the destroying tempest left
In mine old age, despoiled, bereft

Of all my children — all save one,
One helpless innocent — my son,
My duteous Robert, and his Jane,
Their precious babes (a lovelier twain
Parents' fond eyes ne'er doated on!)
All in one short, short month were gone —
My Reuben's orphan child, alone" ——

" Then she is mine! my Lucy's child!
It glanced across me, when she smiled
So like her mother. Oh! I thought "——
And to his heart the stranger caught
The youthful Agnes. " Mine own child!" —
And then with looks and voice less wild,
He faltered — " Oh, my mother! bless
Thy long lost son." But joy's excess,
And wonder, in old Alice wrought
Such strange confusedness of thought,
Such strong emotion, that her tongue,
Denied the power of utt'rance, clung
To its parched roof — but when he flung

His arms about her withered neck,
And when she felt upon her cheek
His tears and kisses, when her ear
Caught that fond whisper, low and near,
" My mother !" its electric sound
At once her spell-like trance unbound,
And all at once her speech was freed. —
" Art thou my very son indeed?"
Trembling exceedingly, she cried—
Then, her old palsied hand applied
(Its touch supplying sight) to trace
The features of that unseen face.
Short was the trembling scrutiny —
" I'm old and blind, yet verily
I do believe that thou art he !"
So saying, on his neck she fell,
And their tears mingled.

They who dwell
In that neat farm by the hill side
Have a sweet home ! look far and wide,

None more inviting may be found,
A sweet-briar hedge encircles round
That flowery patch of garden-ground
Before the dwelling — to the right,
An orchard stretches out of sight.
The hill slopes up behind — a rise
Of ancient beech, and westward lies
The yard, where barns and granaries,
And golden ricks (the farmer's pride),
A goodly show! stand side by side.
And morn and eve brings home again
To those full stalls a lowing train
(That rosy maids, and Giles's care,)
To yield their milky burdens there.
A cherry-tree, whose ev'ry bough
Is garlanded with blossoms now,
Whitens the front — that gable grey,
The structure of a long passed day.
Crosses of mould'ring mossy stone
Surmount the double peak, and one

With ivy bands so thickly wound
As if a little turret crowned
The antique roof — the porch beneath,
Arched over with a knotted wreath
Of bare grey stems, that, like a vine,
Their ragged sinews intertwine,
Shall soon its summer shade resume —
Sweet jess'mine shade, its lovely gloom,
Studded with clust'ring blossoms white
Like stars upon the pall of night.

A blackbird in that sunny nook
Hangs in his wicker cage — but look!
What youthful form is hers, whose care
Has newly hung the fav'rite there?
'Tis Agnes! — Hark that peal of bells
Its Sabbath invitation swells,
And forth they come, the happy three,
The re-united family.

The son leads on with cautious pace
His old blind parent, in whose face,
Age-worn and care-worn though it be,
The bright reflection you may see
Of new-born happiness — and she
With restless joy who bounds along,
Beginning oft the oft checked song
(Checked by remembrance of the day).
A moment then, less wildly gay,
She moves demurely on her way,
Clasping her new-found father's hand.
But who can silence at command
The soaring sky-lark's rapt'rous strain?
The mountain-roebuck, who can rein?
Agnes' gay spirit bursts again
Discretion's bonds — a cobweb chain! —
And off she starts, in frolic glee,
Like fawn from short restraint set free.

Go, happy child! thy present joys
No painful retrospect alloys —

But they who follow thee look back
On long affliction's gloomy track,
Where many they have loved right dear
Are left behind. — If *they* were here!
Thought whispers — but a low breathed sigh
Is all its language: — gratefully
To the Lord's temple they repair,
To pour out thanks and praises there
For present blessings — for past pain,
Not dull oblivion to obtain,
But resignation — and to find
That holy calm, that peace of mind,
By which, ev'n here on earth, is given
A foretaste of the joys of Heaven.

THE

APRIL DAY.

20*th*, 182[illegible]

All day the low hung clouds have dropt
  Their garnered fulness down;
All day that soft grey mist hath wrapt
  Hill, valley, grove, and town.

There has not been a sound to day
  To break the calm of nature;
Nor motion, I might almost say,
  Of life or living creature:

Of waving bough, or warbling bird,
Or cattle faintly lowing;
I could have half-believed I heard
The leaves and blossoms growing.

I stood to hear — I love it well,
The rains continuous sound:
Small drops, but thick and fast they fell,
Down straight into the ground.

For leafy thickness is not yet
Earth's naked breast to skreen,
Though ev'ry dripping branch is set
With shoots of tender green.

Sure since I looked, at early morn,
Those honey-suckle buds
Have swelled to double growth: that thorn
Hath put forth larger studs.

That lilac's cleaving cones have burst,
The milk-white flowers revealing;
Ev'n now, upon my senses first,
Methinks their sweets are stealing:

The very earth, the steamy air,
Is all with fragrance rife!
And grace and beauty ev'ry where
Are flushing into life.

Down, down they come — those fruitful stores!
Those earth-rejoicing drops!
A momentary deluge pours,
Then thins, decreases, stops.

And e'er the dimples on the stream
Have circled out of sight,
Lo! from the west, a parting gleam
Breaks forth of amber light.

It slants along that emerald mead,
Across those poplars tall,
And brightens every rain-gloss'd weed
On that old mossy wall.

The windows of that mansion old
Enkindled by the blaze,
Reflect in flames of living gold,
The concentrated rays.

But yet, behold — abrupt and loud
Comes down the glittering rain —
The farewell of a passing cloud,
The fringes of its train.

'Tis o'er — the blackbird's glossy wing
Flirts off the sparkling spray,
As yon tall elm he mounts, to sing
His evening roundelay.

And many a little tuneful throat
Responds its vesper strain:
And life's awakening murmurs float,
And motion stirs again.

And down the lane comes winding slow,
A train of lazy cows,
Fresh from rich glebes, yet loitering now
A hedgerow feast to browse.

With sounds of modulation rude,
Yon cow-boy chides them on,
And echo mocks, in sportive mood,
Th' uncouthly varied tone.

They pass — the unwilling lingerers pass,
The trampled lane is clear —
Not long — a living fleecy mass,
Comes bleating in the rear.

Through distant trees, the sun-set glow
Freckles their fleeces white:
Behind those elms I lose them — now
They wind again in sight:

They wind into the stream of light
That pours across the road,
And all the moving mass is bright,
In one broad yellow flood.

And even of these, some stragglers fain
Would linger by the way;
Some "milky mothers" of the train,
With their young lambs at play.

But there's a faithful guard at hand,
One ever active, bold —
The marshal of the straggling band —
The watcher of the fold. —

Look! how with ireful bark and mien
He paces to and fro —
Yet scarce the last born lamb, I ween,
Much heeds that wrathful show.

The shepherd saunters last — but why
Comes with him pace, for pace,
That ewe? and why so piteously
Looks up the creature's face?

Swung in his careless hand, she sees
(Poor ewe!) a dead, cold weight,
The little one, her soft warm fleece
So fondly cherished late.

But yesterday, no happier dam
Ranged o'er those pastures wide,
Than she, fond creature! when the lamb
Was sporting by her side.

It was a new-born thing — the rain
Poured down all night — its bed
Was drenched and cold: — morn came again,
But the young lamb was dead.

Yet the poor mother's fond distress
Its ev'ry art had tried,
To shield, with sleepless tenderness,
The weak one at her side.

Round it all night, she gathered warm
Her woolly limbs — her head
Close curved across its feeble form —
Day dawned, and it was dead. —

She saw it dead — she felt, she knew
It had no strength, no breath —
Yet how should she conceive, poor ewe!
The mystery of death?

It lay before her stiff and cold —
Yet fondly she essayed
To cherish it in love's warm fold,
Then restless trial made.

Moving, with still reverted face,
And low complaining bleat,
T'. entice from their damp resting place,
Those little stiff'ning feet.

All would not do, when all was tried —
Love's last fond lure was vain ;
So quietly by its dead side
She laid her down again.

Methinks, to that dumb creature's woe
Were human utt'rance lent,
In some such words as these, would flow
The strain of her lament : —

" My little love! my hope! my pride!
What dreadful change is wrought in thee,
Since thou wert sporting by my side,
But yestermorn, so joyously?

" Oh! thine has been a long, long sleep!
Such sleep I never saw before —
So hushed, so motionless, so deep,
As thou would'st ne'er awaken more.

" Wilt thou no more awaken? — never?
How shall I live without thee now?
Methought, we two should live for ever —
The happiest, blithest creature thou,

" And I, the most content, to lead
Thy little feet o'er vale and hill;
To show thee, through the greenest mead
Where flows the purest, clearest rill;

" Where blue-bells fringe the shelving banks,
And beds of early violets grow:
And daffodils in golden ranks,
Are peering in the stream below.

" When the east wind blew loud and chill,
And fast the fleecy clouds were driven,
We would have sought that sheltering hill,
Warm with the last red light of even; —

" Or close beside yon broom-clad knoll
Have chosen out our thymy bed,
Where the wild rabbit digs her hole,
With waving fern-leaves overspread;

" And when the panting herds forsook
The open plain in summer weather,
I know a little sheltered nook,
Where we two would have crept together:

" There's a deep, dark pool in that tangled brake,
That no breeze has ever ruffled;
For the winds, when their loudest din they make,
Sound there with their voices muffled.

" Over head the dark hollys are woven across:
Dark and cool, their close circle they spread;
And the spring bubbles up, through the greenest moss
That was ever by fountain head.

" I thought, my beloved! in that pleasant spot,
How happy we two should be —
I thought, my beloved! —but thou hearest me not:
Thou wilt never go there with me: —

" Thou hearest me not — thou can'st not hear,
Or I should not moan in vain:
Thou wilt never go with me, my gentle dear!
Nor sport by my side again —

" There are happy mothers beneath the sun —
Some have two lambs — some three —
But I, my little lovely one !
But I, had only thee !"

THE

SEA OF LIFE.

THERE is a vast deep lake, an inland sea
  Girdled with lofty mountains round about,
Precipitous — whose dark immensity
  Whate'er beyond them lieth, doth shut out.
No line hath e'er, no far descending lead
The depths of that great hollow fathomed.
'Tis thought its waters, like the Caspian's, take,
  Long under ground, their secret, silent way,
And all at once in some far country break
  Up from their channels dark, into the light of day.

And like the Caspian, flux, reflux of tide,
Nor visible outlet is there in that sea,
Though rivers rushing down the mountain's side
Do pour therein their streams continually;
And floods of mighty rains, and melted snows,
Feed that great gulf that never overflows:
On whose broad bosom stately navies ride,
And many barks thereon are sailing far and wide.

Of divers fashions, freightage, bulk are they —
Some gallant ships, by steady seamen manned —
Some painted shallops, all with streamers gay,
Where the young helmsman steers with careless hand.
Some with rich merchandise and precious ore
Deep laden — others on their decks that bear
Silk awnings, underneath whose crimson glare
The wine-cup's rubied nectar sparkles high,
With roses wreathed — whence sound of revelry,
Viol and lute, proceedeth evermore:

And as they float along, the summer sigh
Wafts from their decks a gale of Araby,
And mellow horns, and full-toned hautboys pour
Sweet sounds that linger long, round islet, rock,
and shore.

And many a solitary mariner
Launcheth his little bark, and to the gale,
If lent a fav'ring breath, doth lightly stir,
Spreads the small canvass of his single sail.
And many a one, with harder toil doth ply
His ceaseless oars — and many a one doth lie
(Keeping his painful balance, hapless wretch !)
On some rude raft — where scarcely he may stretch
His cramped limbs, or urge with effort strong
The stroke that works his way so tediously along.

Who would not deem a wretch forlorn as these,
To death, to certain death, were hast'ning on ?
Rise for a moment but a fresher breeze,
A rougher wave, his crazy planks are gone —

Yet such a one, will oft as in despite
Of seeming fate, a shelt'ring harbour gain;
While the proud bark, that o'er the billows white
Bounds like a war-horse eager for the fight,
Rejoicing in his beauty and his might,
Varies her course, and spreads her wings in vain.
A little cloud ascendeth from the sea —
A hollow murmur soundeth sullenly —
Night gathers round her, waves arise, winds roar —
The humble raft is safe — the bark is seen no more!

Full many a perilous emprise awaits
On such as navigate that land-locked sea —
Eddies and whirlpools, currents, narrow straits,
And hidden shoals, and sunken rocks there be.
And human prudence ill can guard, I ween,
'Gainst dangers, sudden, partial, unforeseen,
That in a moment, from its placid sleep,
Stirs up the boiling bosom of the deep —

A liquid column shooting from below
Joins its proud capital, that dark, dense cloud —
Now for your lives, affrighted seamen! now
Ply all your oars, and all your canvass crowd —
In vain — the dreadful pillar of the sea,
With giant stride, advanceth furiously —
They're in its vortex — one loud burst like thunder,
The vessel's whirled aloft — dashed downwards —
rent asunder!

Oft from the bottom, with loud hissing roar,
Above the waves, volcanic mounts arise,
Whose horrid mouths, whence streams of lava pour,
Shoot up their red artillery to the skies,
And other mounts as suddenly appear,
Not like those dread creations, forms of fear,
But low, smooth islets, gleaming to the sun,
Like pastures lately from the waters won —
There land some blithe adventurers, and prepare
The genial feast, the gay carouse, to share;

When lo! — from every lip the colour flies,
From every heart, life's hurried streams retreat —
Each question each, with horror-speaking eyes;
The *living* island quakes beneath their feet!
The boat! the boat! — 'tis drifted far away —
Down, down the monster dives, and fathoms down
sink they.

But time were short, and words would fail, to tell
The snares and perils of that treach'rous lake:
At times so smooth, without a billowy swell,
An infant might thereon its pleasure take —
And it becometh oft a stagnant sea,
A sea of glass — oh! worse thereon to be,
Than in the wildest tempest — worse to lie,
Beneath the glowing, glaring, cloudless sky,
Upon the dull dead water, thick with weeds,
Where in foul myriads fat corruption breeds,
And flames of putrid vapour, through the night,
Crawl on the oily waves with lurid light —

Oh worse that stifling calm, than rudest jar,
Direct conflicting crash of elemental war!

But there's a lovely state of calm repose,
Peaceful inaction, on that wondrous sea;
And many a solitary dreamer knows
(Oh dear to him!) the silent luxury,
Along some shelving, pebbly shore, to lie
With up-turned face watching with ear and eye
The little waves come rippling to his feet,
The white clouds sailing like a merchant fleet
Along the verge of the blue firmament:
Most beauteous, when with roseate colours blent,
Reflected blushes of the crimson west—
When the great glorious source of light and heat,
The sun, into the chambers of his rest,
Majestically slow, sinks down on ocean's breast.

Spread o'er the bosom of the lake there lie
Numberless islands, differing each from each

(Albeit pavilioned by the self-same sky)
In aspect, soil, production — these to reach
Those restless prows incessantly do ply,
And mostly for the loftier land they try,
(Contending oft with currents, winds, and tides,)
Passing the little lowly havens by,
Green isles, where sweet security abides —
Good Heaven! how blinded wretched mortals be
To their own good — with what perversity
From reason's, virtue's light they turn away,
After their dark imaginings, to stray
From innocence, peace, hope, and happiness for aye.

Towards one proud isle innumerous voyagers steer,
A rocky mountain, towering o'er the deep,
Where the vexed surges, checked in mid career,
Lash with incessant din the ramparts steep —
Abrupt and rugged, from the waves, arise
Those rocky bulwarks, till they scale the skies,

And on the summit, reared by genii hands,
Amongst the clouds, a gorgeous temple stands.
Up to that shrine, with eager eyes, they gaze,
The dauntless pilgrims that arrive below —
Up to that shrine they toil a thousand ways,
By steep, rude stairs, or rugged paths that go
Beneath impending rocks, or skirting now,
High o'er the boiling flood, some loose crag's beetling brow.

Many are washed from off the landing place,
A shelving, slippery ledge, and many fall
From their loose footing on the crumbling wall,
And many, just as they have won the race,
To the throned idol's golden footstool crawl,
Drop down and die. — She sitteth there in state,
And the four winds that on her bidding wait
To the four quarters of the world proclaim,
As each arrives, the favor'd votary's name.

Yea! and his name who dies arriving there,
Loudest of all, their brazen trumps declare.
And for this guerdon, mortal creatures strain
Their vital sinews — strive with peril, pain,
Suspicion, hatred; — from all sweets refrain,
Of love's contagious softness: — for this meed,
They wait, watch, languish, starve, encounter, bleed,
Wrestle with fortune, fight against despair,
Barter their hopes eternal bliss to share,
And all for one poor prize, one blast of empty air.

Not distant far, a sister-island rears
  Its lofty head — a huge o'erhanging rock. —
Leagues off at sea, the startled pilot hears
  The breakers mining with perpetual shock
Its hollow base; yet boldly on he steers,
With thousands more. Some perish instantly,
And some surmount the dangers of the sea,
And some, by hollow, dark, and winding ways

Up to the top a tedious passage find ;
Some climb from crag to crag, but no one stays
To help his fellow toiling up behind.
Careless of any interest save his own,
Friend jostles friend, or hurls him rudely down
To gain his footing : so, by patience, strength,
Or favouring fortune, some attain at length
The goal of their desires, the tower of might,
Whose massive grandeur crests that dizzy height.
And there, the gloomy guardians of the place
Before the gate dispensing favors stand : —
What gasping eagerness in every face,
What craving haste extendeth every hand
To clutch the glittering symbols of command.
Crowns, truncheons, maces, toys of all degrees,
All fashions, forms, those greedy claimants seize.
Yet each, unsatisfied, with grudging eyes
Examineth askance, his neighbour's prize :
On his own lot, disdainfully looks down,
And he who grasps a truncheon coveteth a crown.

For these twin isles, though thousand shallops bear
As many towards a third, their course direct:
No dreadful surf obstructs the landing there,
But landed, many hapless souls are wrecked
By divers chances, when they least expect
Ought of untoward accident to meet —
The hollow earth gives in beneath their feet,
And down they sink engulfed — or led astray
By *igni fatui* from the beaten way,
They founder in the marshes of despair.
There is a heavy dulness in the air
Of that sad isle: no shrub of lively green
On its bare hills, and barren plains is seen.
No merry, tuneful bird alighteth there:
No daisied green sward paints the river's brink,
(A sluggish stream,) no herds come there to drink:
But many human eyes intently pore
Upon its waters. — They on Ganges' shore,
That ancient sacred flood, less fervently adore.

For through the shallows of the island stream,
Its golden sands and sparkling pebbles gleam:
And when the hills are swept by heavy rains,
Their furrowed sides reveal the streaky veins
Of precious ore — and in their entrails deep,
Wealth, such as mind hath ne'er imagined,
Is treasured up. — To amass a glittering heap
From mine, from mountain, or from river's bed,
The island pilgrim toileth evermore —
But as he pileth up the precious store,
Strange symptoms of disease, unknown before,
Seize on his heart: — a cold contraction there,
An aching, craving, wearing sense of care,
A deadness of the finer faculties —
Oh, Heaven! that any living, for such prize
Of paltry worth, should ever sacrifice
All that to bless this earthly state is given —
Social affection, kindly charities,
Sweet peace (the peace of God,) and the sure hope
of Heaven!

I may not tarry every isle to name,
So many on that liquid plain there be:
But shame it were, in truth, insensate shame,
To pass unnoticed, unobservantly
One little spot, the loveliest spot that lies
Beneath the sun, on this side Paradise —
'Tis an oasis on the watery waste! —
An isle of palms and fountains! — Would ye taste
The clearest stream, that hath it source below,
Pilgrims of earth! to those pure fountains go.
No rocks or mountains, warring with the skies
Like rebel giants, frowningly arise
In that fair isle — but woody uplands skreen
Warm, flowery vales, that nestle in between,
And leafy glades — and every now and then
The little rills, that water every glen,
Winding abruptly from their coverts green,
(Like modest merit oft unseen they run,)
Glance out like sparkling silver in the sun.

And flocks are feeding on the green hill side,
And herds are standing in the shallow streams,
And many a spire, (a soul-directing guide)
Points up to heav'n — and many a cottage gleams
White in the sunshine, round each sacred dome,
Like flocks at rest beside their master's home.
There happy age, by filial duty cheered,
Setteth as calmly as a summer's day —
Blest childhood there, by love parental reared,
Riseth as jocund as a morn of May —
There wedded love, fond, faithful, pure, sedate,
Like cloudless noon, doth hold its high estate,
And friendship joyeth in her own mild light,
Like the clear moon on some sweet autumn night.
Brothers and sisters, like twin stars emit
Their mingled radiance — so all hearts are knit
In one great chain of closely woven ties,
Whence love in all its rich varieties —
Gradations infinite — throughout the isle
Sheddeth, diffuseth one perennial smile.

Beats there a heart that doth not feel with me?
Such spot is heaven on earth, if heaven on earth
can be.

I have dwelt there — but one disastrous day
Drove me for ever from that lovely land;
And now my little boat doth drift away
(Steered by a reckless, an unskilful hand)
With ev'ry current, like an idle weed,
That floating on, no human eye doth heed.
Lately I drifted towards an island bay
Whence dulcet sounds had reach'd me oft before:
Wond'ring I listened — long entranc'd I lay,
Then moored beside the laurel-fringed shore.
And soon, such bursts of heav'nly harmony,
On mine o'erpowered, astonished sense 'gan pour
As mortal ear, methought, ne'er heard before —
At first, a grand, full, choral symphony
Rolled its rich volume on the echoes round —
Then single voices sang melodiously,
Each to the harp or lyre's according sound

The gentle airs were hushed — the waving trees
With all their many-voiced leaves were still:
Silent was ev'ry little tuneful bill;
The very echos paused upon the hill
As if they feared the closing strain to seize,
And miss or mar the next prelusive thrill.
And scaly creatures, dwellers of the seas,
Came floating round, as if to take their fill
Of that entrancing melody — with these,
The dolphin came, attracted once again,
By the strange sweetness of a mortal strain.
And I! and I! o'ermastered by the spell,
Caught from the shore a hollow sounding shell,
And strung it loosely with a fibrous weed,
And with a hurried hand of trembling speed
Swept the rude harp — but started back dismayed
At its first sound — then listened, — and again
Came o'er mine ear that soul-inspiring strain,
And I once more impulsively assayed
Mine own faint melody — in vain! in vain!

Wand'ring and weak, the soulless sounds arose,
And then, again, the full, deep gust of *those* —
Oh! 'twas a contrast more than heart could bear:
I hid my face, and wept in weak despair;
And like a wayward infant, crossed at play,
Crushed the unconscious shell, and tore the strings
away.

One island yet — I have unsung the rest —
One briefly noticed, and my task is o'er —
It may be called "The Island of the Blest" —
Oh! with the tents upon that happy shore,
That mine were pitched securely — never more
To be razed thence — there only — last and best —
Must be my home, my refuge and my rest —
Perpetual twilight, meek, serene, and pale,
Gently enfoldeth with her matron veil
(E'en as a mother foldeth to her breast
Her sleeping babe) that island of the blest.

Not *dusky* twilight — but that lovely hue
Just as the sun hath faded in the west,
That softly stealing o'er the evening dew
Blends ev'ry harsher outline on the sky
In one soft tone of perfect harmony.
In that calm place, where meditation dwells
With cheerful hope, sweet sound of solemn bells
Comes frequent on the pleased ear — and oft
A chant of human voices, silver soft,
Deep, rapt'rous, full ascendeth to the skies,
The incense of perpetual sacrifice.
But they who sojourn in that happy isle
No useless life of slothful quiet lead:
For other wants and weaknesses they toil,
And many a one, at his worst hour of need,
Hath proved, what precious balsam they can pour
Into his fest'ring wounds — and evermore
(Bearing where'er they go, with faith divine,
A mystic cross, their banner, and their sign,)

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From isle to isle, those holy pilgrims roam,
Seeking the maimed, diseased, despised, and poor,
Those whom the world forsakes or cannot cure.
All such *they* seek — and to their island home
Bear the poor outcasts — gently tend them there,
Bind up their wounds, speak peace to their despair,
And if the sufferers faint, complain, repine,
Uphold before their eyes that sacred sign,
The mystic cross — and they, with faith of soul
Who look thereon, are presently made whole —
Oh with the tents upon that happy shore
That mine were pitch'd at last, and firm for evermore!

WILLIAM AND JEAN.

BRIGHT was the morn, and glowing bright
The sultry hour of noon;
But lovelier is this evening light —
This Sabbath-eve of June.

The sun yet lingers in the west —
On spire, and roof, and wall;
On wooded slope, and river's breast,
His parting glories fall.

And insect swarms are on the wing
Down every slanting ray,
And birds from every hedgerow sing
Their vesper roundelay; —

A concert blithe — and with its notes
The sound of rustic glee,
As up the winding vale it floats,
Comes mingling merrily.

The swain has left his spade and fields,
The lass, her six days' care:
The dusky shop its prisoner yields,
To freedom, light, and air.

Twice paid religious sacred rites
Beneath that hallowed dome;
As health and youth, and love invites,
The happy rustics roam.

The ploughman in his snow-white frock —
(For still on village-green,
Albeit e'en village-maids can mock,
That rural garb is seen,)

In snow-white frock, contrasting strong
His brown and glowing cheek,
He speeds the well-known path along,
His chosen maid to seek.

The maid in all her best array,
White hose, and shining shoe,
In conscious beauty shines as gay,
Ye birth-night belles! as you.

And many a dame with graver pride,
And calculating face,
Close by her aged partner's side
Walks forth with sober pace.

Her gown, where flowers of every hue
In glossy mixture glow,
Drawn high each gaping pocket through,
The long white skirt to show.

His Sunday suit, in oaken chest
Six days preserved with care,
(The same on holyday and feast,
His fathers wont to wear,)

Short armed — wide skirted — on the breast,
With buttons long and bright,
Lapel'd; revealing the plush vest
In all its crimson light.

Not always thus in social guise
Those ancient helpmates fare:
Our country way, oft otherwise
Marshals the wedded pair.

With hands behind his back that sway
His oaken cudgel's weight,
The husband plods along the way,
Before his trudging mate.

Yet cordial words between them pass,
Remarks go to and fro
On turnip-crops, and after-grass —
How pigs and children grow.

What whim bewitches Farmer Grimes,
With that new-fangled plough —
And now (when *they* were young) the times
Were better far than now.

And younger groups of married folk,
Yet new to worldly cares.
Yet new to wedded life, still yoke
Close linked in social pairs.

The husband, with one steady arm,
Supports his sun-burnt mate —
The other clasps a feebler form —
His first-born's infant weight.

But when before them, children twain
Go prattling on the road,
The mother (if a third remain)
Must bear the chubby load.

'Tis pleasant on their way to meet,
Returning gaily home,
The groups such Sabbath-evening sweet
Has tempted forth to roam.

Young laughing girls in merry bands,
And serving maidens neat,
And lovers true, whose plighted hands
Shall soon in wedlock meet;

And parents, bringing up the rear
With patriarchal grace,
Of sturdy sons and daughters dear —
And oft a second race,

Their little ones, completes the band;
The babe scarce two months old,
And urchins in each chubby hand
Green boughs and flowers that hold.

But one there is, whom oft I've seen,
A man with eyes cast down,
Who wanders with dejected mien,
Pale, serious, and alone.

Yet not alone — for, nestling warm
As in a mother's breast,
A little infant's sickly form
To his is fondly pressed.

Twelve months, twelve little months! are fled,
Since warm with hope of life,
And well-earned comfort, William wed
His long bethrothed wife.

His long betrothed — for duteous Jean
Had still his suit denied,
To soothe the woes of age and pain
A parent's bed beside.

And William many a stormy sea
Had ploughed, and distant main,
To amass, 'gainst she his own should be,
A little hoard for Jean.

And many a farewell had they wept,
And many a welcome spoken,
And each with faith's devotion kept
True love's mysterious token —

The broken sixpence: — simple bond
Two simple hearts that plighted,
As pure, as faithful, and as fond
As ever love united.

And many a treasure Jean possessed
Brought over seas, to prove
That absence in her William's breast
Had never weak'ned love.

Seeds whose bright hues, and rich perfumes,
A tropic climate boasts —
And handkerchiefs from Indian looms,
And skins from northern coasts.

Herself with foresight provident,
On future household cares,
And household garniture intent,
A goodly store prepares:

A four-post bed at second price,
Yet scarce the worse for wear —
Gay flowery chintz of quaint device
Its flowing curtains fair.

And drawers with locks and knobs of brass,
And wood of polished grain,
Tea-chest, and tray, and looking-glass,
And patchwork counterpane.

" So, when the marriage day shall come,"
She thinks with honest pride
" I shall not enter William's home
A vain, unportioned bride."

Thus years crept on, till youth's sweet prime
With Jean had passed away,
And toil and hardship, more than time,
Mixed William's locks with grey.

But ruddy was his sun-burnt cheek;
And in his Jeanie's face
Love beamed with tenderness so meek,
He missed no youthful grace.

At length the object of her cares,
The aged parent, died;
And William wiped away the tears
Of his long-promised bride.

The days of mourning for the dead
(No shortened period) o'er,
In last year's June the pair were wed,
On earth to part no more.

At least but once — "But once again
Shall William's absence grieve thee,
One short, safe cruize, and then, my Jean!
He never more will leave thee."

" Oh, William! oft I've known the pain
Of parting thus with thee —
God grant as safely back again
Thou may'st return to me."

" Aye, doubt it not — a sailor's wife,
My Jeanie! and in tears!
I go not to the battle strife:
We part not, love! for years."

He chides those tears, but on her cheek
His own are mingling too:
He only looks, he cannot speak,
That ling'ring, long adieu.

The ship sails on, till many a day,
And many a week is past;
And time with William creeps away
That lately sped so fast.

At length near palmy isles she moors,
(Those isles th' Atlantic laves,)
And spicy breezes from whose shores
Come wafted o'er the waves.

Fair are those shores, but William's eyes
Are to their glories dim —
England's green vales and cloudy skies
Are dearer far to him.

And when on deck 'tis his to keep
The silent watch of night,
To that dear land across the deep
Unfettered thought takes flight.

Back to his humble home she flies,
And faithfully pourtrays,
Where his own Jean with tearful eyes
For William's safety prays.

As on the tender thought he dwells
His own are glist'ning too —
But hope the gath'ring mist dispels
As sun-beams drink the dew.

She wafts him to a fairer scene,
The rapt'rous hour of meeting —
More blest for sorrows that have been,
That sweet and silent greeting!

The anchor's weighed, and set the sails,
And come the blessed day;
And the good ship, with fav'ring gales,
Bounds merrily away.

The gale lasts fair — one steady breeze
Impels her briskly o'er;
And soon impatient William sees
Old England's cliffs once more.

No other eye so soon discerns
Those rocky bulwarks white;
No other heart like William's burns,
Exulting at the sight.

They reach the port, but dull delays
Short space detain him there:
Cold reason thus computes three days —
Love reckons each a year.

But he's released, he's in the boat,
And tugging at the oar —
Three hearty cheers, and off they float,
And stoutly pull to shore.

Their keel has hardly kissed the sand,
(The waves were rough that day,)
No matter — William leaps to land
Through clouds of dashing spray.

And soon on reeling summit high
Of crowded coach he's stowed —
The wheels go round — the horses fly —
They smoke along the road.

His clumsy sea-chest, long and large,
The snail-pac'd waggon brings —
But one small bundle (all his charge)
O'er his own shoulder slings.

Rare trifles, as in days of yore,
For Jeanie it conveys —
For her he loves — now ten times more
Than e'en in courtship's days.

The wheels go round — the horses fly —
They smoke along the way —
But William's thoughts, impatiently,
Fly swifter far than they.

"What frightful speed, o'er these rough stones,"
Cries one, "with such a load!"
"What heavy sailing, William groans,
Along so smooth a road!"

Rugged or smooth, the journey's o'er,
The twanging horn is blown;
And William, at the well known door,
With one light spring leaps down

He's at the door — the threshold's past —
"My Jean! my own dear love!
My wife! thy William's come at last"—
No answer — "She's above."

And up the narrow stair he flies,
And to her chamber-door —
But hark! an infant's feeble cries —
Oh, joy! unfelt before.

" My wife ! my child ! Oh, sweet surprise !"
In — in — with stealthy care —
Aye, William ! on that bed she lies,
But death's thy rival there.

Pale as her shroud that sunken cheek,
And cold that marble brow ;
Those sealed and rigid lips can speak
No joyful welcome now.

Tears (sent from Heaven) are sorrow's balm —
But William cannot weep —
His grief is passionless and calm,
As Jean's untroubled sleep.

Vainly they urge him — those around —
They bid him weep and pray —
He hears their murm'ring voices sound,
But knows not what they say.

The infant moans — with gesture wild
He shrinks, and shudd'ring start —
" Wilt thou not look on Jeanie's child ?"
Those words have thrilled his heart.

" On Jeanie's child ! — Oh, Jean ! my Jean !" —
He folds it to his breast :
The flood of anguish pours amain,
So fearfully represt.

He weeps, he kneels beside the dead —
His tears are on her cheek :
That dear, dear face, though life has fled,
Still beautifully meek.

So long he looks, wild thoughts arise,
Th' extravagance of love —
He almost thinks on those closed eyes
The long dark lashes move.

Oh, William! grief distracts thy brain —
Resign that senseless clay —
Those eyes will ne'er unclose again
Till the great judgment-day —

'Tis done — his eyes have looked their last —
They close the coffin-lid —
The pang unspeakable is past —
In the dark grave she's hid,

She's in her grave, and he's alone
And unconnected here,
Save to that hapless little one,
Whose birth has cost so dear.

His Jeanie's child! her last bequest!
To give it life she died —
Oh! sad and sacred interest —
Earth has none such beside.

He watches it (a sickly thing)
With all a mother's care —
He sings to it, as mothers sing,
He fears, as mothers fear.

'Tis in his arms as soon as drest —
'Tis seldom from his sight
A few short hours, and in his breast
'Tis cradled half the night.

And oft on Sabbath eve, as now,
With that dear charge he strays,
With head declined and thoughtful brow,
By least frequented ways.

He tarries not with those who meet,
Nor seeks their path to shun;
Has courteous words for all who greet,
But social smiles for none.

And when the evening shades close round,
And to their homes they hie,
He seeks the little heap of ground,
Where all his comforts lie.

A sad good night to Jeanie's dust,
In tender silence given,
Is sweetened by the blessed trust
Of meeting her in heaven.

CONTE À MON CHIEN.

COME, my old Dog! come hither now,
And rest thine head upon my knee,
And let us talk together: thou
Hast something much at heart I see.

Aye, let them laugh, who understand
No utterance save of human speech —
We have a language at command
They cannot feel, we cannot teach.

Yes, thy dark eye informeth mine,
With sense than words more eloquent:
Thy very ears, so long and fine,
Are flexibly intelligent.

Come hither, then, my Dog! and rest
Thy poor old head upon my knee,
And tell me, why, with looks distrest,
Thou eyest me so reproachfully.

Donna? the cat? Old fool! is she
The object of thy jealous fears?
Fie, Ranger! ill becometh thee
Such fancies at thy sober years.

Think'st thou that I remember not
Thy dearer claims of days "lang syne?"
Can "auld acquaintance be forgot?"
And love, and worth, and faith like thine?

What though I smooth her velvet fur,
Whose mottled hues so finely blend:
What though I coax and fondle her,
She's but a fav'rite — *thou* my friend.

And though thy ears once glossy brown
Are faded now: though hoary white
With age's frost thy nose is grown,
And dull thy hearing and thy sight;

And though thy once fleet limbs resign
Their spring, then light as air-blown feather,
I love thee more for ev'ry sign
That tells how long we've lived together.

And still thine eye is quick to see,
To know me yet far off: thine ear
(Oh love supplied deficiency!)
Is keen *my* voice, *my* step to hear.

And still thou com'st with wild misrule,
As in past time, to welcome me:
And yet thou think'st, old jealous fool!
That that dull thing can rival thee.

Dost thou e'er hear me summon her
To be companion of my walk?
Dost thou e'er hear me talk to her,
As thou and I art wont to talk?

"But, mistress! on your lap she lies,
While I am crouching at your feet:
And I've looked on with envious eyes,
And seen her from your fingers eat."

Now, my good friend! can thoughts arise
So senseless in such brains as thine;
Compare thine own with Donna's size,
And just reflect that cats must dine.

Look at that huge thick paw — and see,
Thy wrist is larger round than mine:
Would'st thou a lady's nursling be?
"But, mistress! why need puss be thine?"

Because she's gentle and polite,
And small, and soft, and clean withal —
Whilst *thou*, for gown of purest white,
Good friend! hast no respect at all.

Thou know'st in ev'ry muddy hole
'Tis thy delight to dive and play —
Fresh from such sport, from head to sole,
You splash'd me o'er but yesterday.

While puss is always clean and sweet —
"Aye, mistress! aye, small chance have I;
Your poor old servant at your feet,
Despised may lay him down and die;

" Yet I've been young, and comely too,
And oft you've kissed my sleek brown head."—
Nay, Ranger! if you take it *so*,
I wish the cat was hanged and dead.

There, Ranger! there! you've won the field,
The foes expell'd, art thou at peace?
Beshrew the heart that would not yield
Indulgence e'en to love's caprice.

Have I not told thee, faithful friend!
That good and evil, joy and pain,
We'll share until our journey's end?
That only death shall part us twain?

And never shall thy latter days
Know want or suff'ring, wrong, distress,
That love, in all its countless ways,
Can remedy, relieve, redress.

And thou shalt live out *all* thy life —
No murd'rous hand shall lay thee low:
Forestalling time's more tedious strife,
With *merciful, preventing* blow.

Their mercy shall not end thy "pain,"
As they are pleased brute age to call:
No, thou shalt live, old friend! to drain,
Life's mingled potion, dregs and all.

And many a sweet that time defies,
Even with the latest drops shall blend,
And many comfort I'll devise
To gild thy latter days, old friend!

Plenteous and soft thy bed shall be,
Heaped up in basket warm and snug,
And thou shalt stretch luxuriously,
Just in the centre of the rug:

And none shall chase thee thence, nor chide
As now thy restless wand'rings — no —
Scratch when thou wilt, the door flung wide,
Shall yield thee passage to and fro.

Just *here*, thy basket they shall bring,
Before the early sun-beams fly;
Where after many a measured ring,
Coiled up at last, thou lov'st to lie.

And never shall thy poor dim eyes
For tempting morsel ask in vain —
Never, if I can help it, rise
In thine old heart one jealous pain.

Well! art thou satisfied, old friend?
Are all thy foolish fancies fled?
"Aye, mistress! till —" I comprehend;
Till next time puss is coax'd and fed.

But come, we've worn this theme to tatters,
And all my logic's thrown away;
So let's discourse on other matters —
And first — I've read a tale to-day —

Thou know'st whate'er I see, read, learn,
Relating to thy species, friend,
I tell thee, hoping it may turn
To thine advantage — so attend

My good old Ranger! while I tell
A true and mournful history,
How in past time it once befel
A little faithful dog like thee.

'Twas in a neighb'ring land: what time
The reign of terror triumphed there:
And ev'ry horrid shape of crime
Stalked out from murder's bloody lair:

And ev'ry fair and stately town
Became a slaughter-house and grave,
Where fell proscription hunted down
The good, the loyal, and the brave:

'Twas in those dreadful times, there dwelt
In Lyons, the defiled with blood,
A loyal family, that felt
The earliest fury of the flood.

Wife, children, friends, it swept away
From wretched Valrive, one by one;
Himself severely doomed to stay
Till ev'ry thing he loved was gone.

A man proscribed — whom not to shun,
Was danger — almost *fate*, to brave:
So all forsook him, all save one,
One humble, faithful, powerless slave.

His dog, old Nina — she had been,
When they were boys, his children's mate:
His gallant Claude! his mild Eugene!
Both gone before him to their fate.

And she had followed mournfully
Their parting steps; and when the door
Closed after them, it seemed as she
Had *felt*, they would return no more.

And when the dismal tidings came
That they had perished in their bloom:
Blighted, cut off without their fame,
Both huddled in one bloody tomb:

And heart-struck in her first despair
The mother sank into her grave,
And Valrive, as he laid her there,
Scarce wished he had the power to save:

But gazed upon that little heap,
Safe shelter for the weary head,
And envied her untroubled sleep,
And longed to share her peaceful bed:

Then, as he stood beside the grave,
With tearless eye, and lip compressed,
Crept to his feet his poor dumb slave,
And moaned as if his thoughts she guessed;

And looked up in his face, and sighed
As if her poor old heart would break:
And in her fond mute language cried,
"Oh, master! live for Nina's sake."

They spurned her off — but ever more
(Surmounting e'en her timid nature)
Love brought her to the prison-door,
And there she crouch'd, fond, faithful creature!

Watching so long, so piteously,
That e'en the jailor (man of guilt,
Of rugged heart,) was moved to cry,
"Poor wretch! there enter, if thou wilt."

And who than Nina more content,
When she had gained that dreary cell,
Where laid in helpless dreariment,
The master loved so long and well.

And when into his arms she leapt,
In her old fond, familiar way;
And close into his bosom crept,
And licked his face — a feeble ray

Of something — not yet comfort — stole
Upon his heart's stern misery;
And his lips moved, "Poor loving fool!
Then *all* have not abandoned me."

The hour by grudging kindness spared
Expired too soon:— the friends must part —
And Nina from the prison fared,
With ling'ring pace, and heavy heart.

Shelter, and rest, and food she found
With one, who for the master's sake,
Though grim suspicion stalked around,
Dared his old servant home to take.

Beneath that friendly roof, each night
She staid, but still returning day
(Aye, the first beam of dawning light)
Beheld her on her anxious way

Towards the prison, there to await
The hour, when through that dismal door,
The keeper, half compassionate,
Should bid her enter as before.

And well she seemed to comprehend
The time apportioned for her stay:
The little hour that with her friend
She tarried then, was all her day.

But what an age of love, and grief,
And confidence, was crowded in it!
How many a long, long life is brief,
Compared with such a heart-fraught minute.

Methinks old Ranger! thou and I
Can fancy all they thought, and said —
Believ'st thou not, of days gone by
Their hearts communed, and of the dead?

Aye, on my life! — And Valrive spoke
(The childless father!) of his boys
To their old playmate, and awoke
The mem'ry of their infant joys.

For ever thus, when in their prime
A parent's hopes in dust are laid;
His heart recurs to that sweet time,
When children round his knees they played.

So oft in Nina's ear was breathed
The names of those beloved ones,
And hers, who could not live bereaved
Of both her children. — Many suns

Went down upon the dreary pile
Where Valrive laid — and evermore,
Punctual as light's returning smile,
Came Nina to the prison-door.

At last the captive's summons came:
They led him forth his doom to hear —
No tremor shook his thrice-nerved frame,
Whose heart was dead to hope and fear.

So with calm step he moved along,
And calmly faced the murd'rous crew:
But close and closer for the throng,
Poor Nina to her master grew.

And she has found a resting place
Between his knees — her old safe home —
And she looks round in ev'ry face,
As if to read his written doom.

There is no mercy but above —
The word goes forth — the fatal breath —
Does instinct, or more powerful love
Tell thee, poor brute! that word is death?

Howe'er informed, a child might see
The sentence struck upon her heart,
And that her eye's keen misery
Said, "Master! we will never part."

'Twas but a step in those dread days
From trial to the guillotine —
A moment — and Valrive surveys,
With stedfast eye, the fell machine.

He mounts the platform — takes his stand
Before the fatal block, and kneels
In preparation — but his hand
A soft warm touch that moment feels.

His eyes glance downward, and a tear
(The last tear they shall ever shed)
Falls as he utters, " *Thou* still here!"
Upon his faithful servant's head.

Yes — she is there — that hellish shout,
That deadly stroke, she hears them plain,
And from the headless trunk starts out,
Ev'n over her, the bloody rain.

And she beholds where they have cast
(Uncoffined, bleeding yet, and warm,
His shallow grave, filled up in haste
Without a prayer) that mangled form.

But where is all the tumult now?
That horrid engine, blood imbrued,
That corse yet quiv'ring with the blow,
That gazing, shouting multitude?

All pass'd away — all vanished — gone —
Ev'n like a vision seen in sleep!
And in its stead, lies all alone
A dog beside a fresh-turned heap.

Old faithful Nina! there lies she,
Her cold head on the cold earth pressed,
As it was wont so lovingly
To lie upon her master's breast.

And there she staid, the livelong day,
Mute, motionless, her sad watch keeping;
A stranger who had passed that way,
Would have believed her dead or sleeping.

But if a step approached the grave,
Her eye looked up, with jealous care
Imploringly, as if to crave
That no rude foot should trample there.

That night, she came not as of late
To her old charitable home:
The next day's sun arose and set,
Night fell — and still she failed to come.

Then the third day her pitying host
Went kindly forth to seek his guest,
And found her at her mournful post
Stretched quietly, as if at rest.

Yet she was not asleep, nor dead,
And when her master's friend she saw,
The poor old creature raised her head,
And moaned, and moved one feeble paw,

But stirr'd not thence — and all in vain
He called, caressed her, would have led —
Tried threats — then coaxing words again —
Brought food — she turned away her head.

So with kind violence at last
He bore her home: with gentle care
In her old shelter tied her fast,
Placed food beside, and left her there.

But e'er the hour of rest, again
He visited the captive's shed,
And there the cord lay, gnawed in twain —
The food untasted — she was fled.

And vexed, he cried, " Perverse old creature !
Well, let her go, I've done my best —"
But there was something in his nature,
A feeling would not let him rest.

So, with the early light once more
Toward the burial-ground went he ;
And there he found her as before,
But not as then stretched quietly ;

For she had worked the long night thro',
In the strong impulse of despair,
Down, down into the grave — and now,
Panting and weak, still laboured there.

But death's cold stiff'ning frost benumbs
Her limbs, and clouds her heavy eye —
And hark ! her feeble moan becomes
A shriek of human agony.

As if before her task was over,
She feared to die in her despair —
But see! those last faint strokes uncover
A straggling lock of thin grey hair —

One struggle! one convulsive start!
And there the face oeloved lies —
Now be at peace thou faithful heart!
She licks the livid lips, and dies.

STANZAS

WRITTEN ON THE DAY SUCCEEDING THAT OF THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE'S DEATH.

MILD, cheerful, gradual, hoary winter's sway
Comes on divested of its wonted gloom:
A darker pall descends on England's day—
The night of death—the winter of the tomb—

The fairest flower of England's royal line,
Untimely blasted, withers on its stem:
And mingled boughs of dark-leaved cypress twine
Their fun'ral wreath, with England's diadem.

Mourn, isles of Britain! empress of the wave,
In dust and ashes, veil thy prostrate head:
Where are thy budding hopes? To the dark grave
Consigned, the narrow chambers of the dead.

In vain, proud city! through your countless ways
Unnumbered hands the feast of lights prepare:
Lo! for your choral songs, and festive blaze,
The death-bell tolls, and fun'ral torches glare.

Oh, bower of Claremont! in your princely halls,
The halcyon dream of youthful love is o'er;
For ever silent — through your echoing walls
The voice of gladness shall resound no more.

Within those walls, where all the smiling train
Of calm domestic bliss so late hath been;
What gloomy shades of desolation reign!
What awful contrast marks the solemn scene!

For buoyant hopes — the silence of despair —
Sad, weeping mourners for th' expecting crowd;
A lifeless infant for the promised heir —
For jewelled robes — the coffin and the shroud.

Pale, cold, and silent, on that narrow bier
She lies, so late in health and beauty's glow —
Dear to all hearts — to *one*, alas! how dear,
What words can tell? Oh, God! assuage his woe.

Approach, unthinking youth! this awful scene
Shall wean thy heart from earth and earthly trust:
Shall eloquently teach, how frail and mean
Are man's designs — *himself* an heap of dust.

How unavailing, youth, and pomp, and power,
From death's insatiate grasp his prey to save:
How powerless to protract, for one short hour,
The mortal stroke, the triumph of the grave.

Nor these alone — for here the lovelier plea
Of piety and innocence was vain —
It was the Lord's inscrutable degree,
And where's the arm, that may His arm restrain?

Yea, 'twas His will, that she whose early fate
From ev'ry eye draws tender sorrows down,
Should for immortal, change her mortal state,
An earthly sceptre, for a heav'nly crown.

PRIDE AND PASSION:

A

DRAMATIC SKETCH.

CHARACTERS.

HARGRAVE.

HELENA.

SOPHIA.

PRIDE AND PASSION.

SCENE, I.

A breakfast parlour in a country house. Afternoon.

HARGRAVE. HELENA.

Har. OH, Helena! whoe'er hath torn the veil
From errors long renounced — atoned for long,
If ever deep contrition made atonement —
Hath acted in his zeal.

Hel. A true friend's part —
And saved me from the misery — the guilt
(Howe'er unconsciously incurred) of plighting,
At God's high altar, a pure, spotless faith,

With thy polluted vows — would'st thou have dared
Approach with me the holy sanctuary,
That consciousness of guilt upon thy soul?

Har. Yes, Helena! I should have vèntured there
In humble confidence — God sees the heart,
And long ago His searching eye hath read
The deep, unfeigned penitence of mine —
He knew my purpose, ever to have proved
To thee a very faithful, tender husband —
He knew — yet, Helena! I do confess,
That in one point I still, still greatly erred —
I should have told thee all.

Hel. Aye — that indeed
Had been a noble act of high souled candour!
Of brave unblushing boldness! — You'd have said —
" Helen! I left thee my betrothed wife,
And pledged, at parting, many solemn vows
Of love, and love's true faith — and called on Heaven
To witness what I spoke, and prosper me
Here and hereafter, as I kept it sacred.

So spake I with my tongue — my heart the while
Mocking thy foolish, fond credulity —
And so I left thee, and in little space
Gat me another love, and laughed with her
At those unmeaning vows, and the weak girl —"

Har. Injurious Helena! hast thou the heart —
Have I deserved — Oh, yes! — I *have* deserved
Rebuke, reproach, but not those bitter taunts —
'*Tis true*, " I left thee my betrothed wife,
And pledged, at parting, many solemn vows,
And called on Heaven to witness what I spoke,"
And *still* I call on Heaven, offended Heaven,
(For Helen! I *have* sinned 'gainst it and thee,)
To witness for me, never truer heart
Poured out sincerer, purer vows than those —
I left thee, Helen! — and a soldier's fate
Led me to foreign lands, through many scenes
Of hardship, danger, death, — and thou wert still
The solitary star that on mine heart
Beamed consolation, when no ray beside

Broke thro' the darkened heavens. — At last I came
Where death in all his terrors reigned supreme,
Reaping the spotted harvest of the plague —
His garners overflowed — the people fell,
Rank after rank, till scarcely some were left
To gather in the sheaves. All Nature's ties,
All human sympathies, were broken down —
Friends forsook friends — fond husbands left their
wives,
And wives their husbands — children fled away
From their expiring parents — mothers heard
Their dying infants wail, and started from them —
And I, a stranger — I, unknown — unloved —
Caught the infection — and I should have perished,
I *must* have perished — but that one kind wretch,
One faithful creature, risked her life for mine —
A poor Mulatto girl — a slave — oh, Helen!
Be not offended, if my voice, e'en now,
Ev'n before thee, with falt'ring gratitude,
Pronounces Abra's name.

She tended me
(My nurse, physician,) when all others fled
The pestilential chamber where I lay.
She watched the crisis — fanned into a flame,
The pale, uncertain, glimm'ring sparks of life —
Nursed my long weakness — with exhaustless art
Devised a thousand comforts, and at last,
Led me, supported by her faithful arm,
To taste the blessed air; which but for her,
I never, never should have breathed again —
The joy that sparkled in her large dark eyes,
When she espied health's kindling rays in mine!
But when I spoke of gratitude, reward,
Dimmed with a sudden mist, they sought the ground.
And when I pressed her further, all she said,
Was "Think of Abra, when you're far away,
In your own country — in your English land —
Remember Abra."
Then, a sudden thought
Flashed o'er my mind — a sudden, painful thought,

And I looked earnestly into her eyes,
Fearing to read — Alas! I read too much —
There was a troubled pause — no word was spoken —
No sigh was breathed — no look was interchanged —
Only the arm fleant on, slightly trembled —
At last, I broke the silence — broke it, Helen!
To speak of thee, of *thee!* to the poor Abra —
I told her, that my future wife would pray
For blessings on my kind deliv'rer's head —
But at the name of *wife*, her dusky cheek
Grew to an earthier darkness, and her lip
Quivered a moment — her white ashy lip —
But not a word she uttered — till at last,
Raising her eyes, (oh, Helen! I were less
Than human had I met that look unmoved,)
" Perhaps," she said, " if *you* would ask it of her,
The English lady — your — your wife, would take
Abra for slave."
But I have told enough;
Officious malice hath possessed thine ear
With the unhappy sequel; with — my guilt —

But, Helena! it hath not told thee all —
It hath not told thee how repentance struck,
(Bitter repentance of the wrong to *thee*,)
At last, I offered for atonement up
The broken heart of Abra. Yes, she died!
Died uncomplaining; blessing me she died,
Me, her destroyer — for the stroke was *home*,
Unerring when I told her we must part;
And e'er I sailed for England, in the grave
I saw her laid at rest — But, oh! her wrongs,
Helen! her wrongs have not been buried with her —
There is a secret chamber in mine heart
Where they are stampt in fiery characters —
And there *are* moments —
'Twas my first design
To have laid open my whole heart to thee:
Its guilt, its anguish, its remorse — Oh, Helen!
That I had yielded to the warning voice
Of my good angel! But an evil genius,
(Has not the same been busy with thine ear?)

Wearing the mask of friendship, came betwixt us,
And counselled me, that I should spare myself
The shame, and thee the insult of a story,
Already shrouded in the night of death —
I listened — wavered — and the wrong prevailed
Over the better reason; and I met thee
(For the first time) with conscience-clouded looks,
And with a heart that had its dark reserves —
How many a time have I repented since
That guilty weakness! Ev'ry word and look
That spoke the innocent confidence of *thy* heart
Pierced *mine* as with a dagger. Now at last,
Tho' late, (and thou wilt say compelled,) I've spread
Its inmost foldings open to thy view —
Oh, Helena! bruise not the broken reed —
Whom God hath stricken, be not thou extreme
To judge and punish. Helena! this hand
Should have been mine to-morrow — Oh! be noble,
Withdraw it not, and — What! you snatch it from me?

Hel. I *take* it from you, Hargrave — not believe me

Now in the heat of anger — that is past,
And I have listened with attentive patience,
(Strange calmness, some would call it,) to a story
That had I learnt from your own lips at first —
From your own honorable impulse — then —
Yet even *then*, it had been weak in me,
Degrading weakness, to have gathered up
The shreds and relics of a broken faith —
But I was spared the trial: you were still
Consistent in deception, and for me
No more remains, than now, for the last time —

Har. Stop, Helen! take a moment's time to think,
Before you utter what — Oh, Helen! Helen!
Be not too hasty — we are all of us
(The very best) weak, frail, offending creatures,
Yet *God* forgives! and you *His creature* also,
And, therefore, Helen! liable to err,
Have you no mercy? no relenting softness?

No touch of woman's own peculiar gift,
Absolving pity? Think, oh think a moment,
How blessed to forgive!

Hel. I do forgive —

E'en as I hope to be myself forgiven —
I do forgive you — pity you — if possible,
Would part from you in peace and charity:
But, Hargrave — *thence* I swerve not — we must part —

Har. And *you* can say it! — *you* can speak the word
With that composed voice, "and that calm eye;"
And *you* are she that for so many years!
Oh, Helen! Helen! is it come to this? —

* * * * * *

But now I see it all — you never loved me,
Or, if you did, some other, newer choice —

Hel. Dare not insult me with the thought — another!

And have I never loved thee? Hargrave! Hargrave!
I know my faults — I have a passionate spirit

A passionate, proud, spirit — proudly cold,
Reserved, indiff'rent to the common eye —
Not prone to sudden friendship — easy trust —
Affection, hov'ring, like an idle moth,
From flower to flower — but once attached, more firm
Than rock of adamant — once fixed in faith,
More unsuspicious than a little child's
Confiding fondness! — And I *have* loved thee! —
I would have followed thee thro' all the world,
I would have borne all evils for thy sake,
All degradations, not by guilt incurred:
Thy honor was my honor — I was proud
(Too proud) of what my fancy painted thee —
Had all the world accused thee, I alone
Had stood out singly against all the world.
In faith unshaken — even now — just now,
I silenced thine accuser, and to thee
Came in the pride of boundless confidence —

* * * * * *

Oh, Hargrave! Hargrave! thine own lips alone
Should have convinced me — And ev'n now, me-
thinks
I do but dream. — Oh! tell me 'tis a dream,
Tell me thou hast not wronged, abused my love —
Tell me thou'rt still what I have ever thought thee,
And I'll believe thee — still believe thee, Hargrave!

Har. Oh! spare me, Helen — dearest, blessed
Helen!
Spare me this torture — is there not — there *is!*
There *is* a melting softness in thine eyes!
Oh! do not hide it — do not dash away
That gracious tear — 'tis Heav'n's own messenger,
Of peace and hope, to a repentant soul.

Hel. 'Tis the last coward sign of woman's
weakness —
But we have talked too long — for both our sakes,
Best speak at once, the word that must be spoken
Hargrave! — farewell.

Har. Obdurate, heartless woman! —

Helen! the time may come that you will wish —
Think what it is to drive me to despair —
From all hope here, and it may be — oh, Helen!
While there is time — there *is yet* time — reflect —
Nay, I *will* take your hand — E'en *friends* at parting —.
You said that we should part in charity!

* * * * * *

Part! part! from whom? —*'thee*, my to-morrow's bride,
And you might yet recall with one poor word —
Might save me yet — and God would bless you for it —
Oh speak it Helena! — one word! —

Hel. Farewell! —

[HARGRAVE *lets fall her hand, looks on her steadfastly for a moment, and rushes from the room. Helena makes a motion as if to recall him, — but quickly recovers herself, and turning to the mantle-piece leans on it*

burying her face on her crossed arms.—
After a few moments,]

Enter SOPHIA.

Sophia. Misguided sister! — Oh! for all the world
I would not have to answer as you may,
For the unhappy fruits of this rash action.

Hel. Well, well, *your* conscience is not burthened with it.
Leave mine to its own reck'ning — leave me, sister!
It had been more considerate, more kind,
Not to have broken in upon a moment
Of feeling — somewhat painful. —

Soph. *Somewhat* painful!
Helen! I've been your comforter before
In many sorrows — nay, you've often wept,
And said it did you good, upon my bosom —
What have I done to forfeit now mine office?

Hel. Nothing, dear sister! nothing, my kind sister!

But now — just now — the sound of *any* voice,
(Ev'n yours, Sophia,) jars my very soul —
In pity, leave me now to mine own thoughts.

Soph. Not without one attempt — one last endeavour
To win thee from thy heart's, severe resolve —
Oh, sister! had you seen his agony! —
I met him rushing wildly from the house:
He would have passed me, but I spoke, and then
He started, stopt, and caught, and wrung my hand:
Began some rapid, incoherent sentence,
I scarce know what — then broke it off abruptly,
Grasped my hand hard, and in a smothered voice
Said, "Farewell, sister!" and was gone — Oh Helen!
How could you drive him forth in such a state?
Has he not grown up almost like a brother
With you and I! — Our mother loved him dearly!
She placed your hand in his upon her death-bed,

And at that solemn altar, you and he
Pledged vows of mutual faith, which —
Hel. *He* has broken —
You plead well, sister — *against* Hargrave's cause.
Soph. I ever thought you gen'rous, noble minded:
Yet you give credence to the vile aspersions
Of that insidious wretch! that base Trevylian! —
Hel. He! the contemptible! I spurned him from me,
He and his lies with such indignant scorn! —
Soph. Then it *was* false! — I knew it!
Hel. Partly false,
But much remained, I never had received
As truth, from any lips save Hargrave's own —
He! he! confessed — telling the tale, indeed,
With such extenuating circumstance,
That had I learnt it first from his own act
Of honorable, self-accusing candor —

I might — I might have proved a fond, weak woman:
I *could* forgive the crime — but its effect,
That mean deception! Can I swear to honor
The man whose disengenuous artifice
My soul despises? — And the insult, too —
The fond, deceived, confiding fool he thought me!

Soph. Sister! there is a heinous sin called Pride—
It pulled the angels down from Heaven to Hell. —

Hel. Art *thou* an angel, to rebuke me thus?

Soph. No angel, Helen! but thine only sister,
The daughter of thy mother, from our birth,
The faithful sharer of thy pains and pleasures —
The *humble* sharer, for I always knew
Thou had'st a mind and fancy soaring far
Above the lowly, common track of mine —
But, sister! " 'tis not always to the swift
The race is giv'n — the battle to the strong" —
I have no wisdom save the borrowed light
Reflected from my Bible — there I read

" The merciful alone shall obtain mercy"
From our long suff'ring Judge — 'tis written, too,
That " blessed are the peace-makers," and therefore
My sister! I have ventured to assume
That holy office — Oh! for words of power —
To melt, persuade, subdue thy stubborn heart!

Hel. I cannot quote as thou dost, sacred texts
To illustrate all subjects — yet I read
And reverence the Scriptures — and I think
'Tis somewhere written — " Have no fellowship
With the deceitful." —

Soph. Are you not afraid —
(If he has erred, so much the more afraid)
To bar him out from hope — perhaps from virtue?
Say, that, to drown reflection, he should plunge
Into a gulf of riotous excess,
Of desp'rate courses. Could you hear it, Helen!
Without a pang? a self-convicting pang
And he is warm and hasty. — Like yourself
Acutely sensitive, and over apt
To leave the rein of his high spirit loose

In the rash hand of feeling, and just now —
He has been ill so lately, and *so* ill!
What if the agitation of his mind
Should re-excite the scarcely smothered sparks
Of that brain fever!

Hel. Peace! — you'll drive *me* mad!
Go — leave me, I command you — vex me not
Beyond my patience — What! you will not go? —
Then I must fly from persecution. —

Soph. Stay! —

[*Sophia catches the gown of Helena to detain her. Helena strikes down her sister's hand with violence.*]

Hel. Obstinate fool! how dare you tempt me thus?

[*Sophia shrinks back, her eyes sorrowfully fixed upon the ground. Helena stands*

silently lookingly on her for a moment, then, with a sudden impulse, flings herself down at Sophia's feet, and sobs out.]

Oh, sister! sister! — but my heart was breaking —

Soph. My poor, poor Helena! thy sister's heart
Bleeds for thy anguish.

Hel. What! can you forgive me? —
And yet I struck you! — I believe I struck you —
Struck down the gentle hand of the best sister!

Soph. I was in part to blame — I should have waited
Till thy vexed spirit had regained a tone
Of more composure.

Hel. Ever thus, my sister!
Thou art thyself — thy mild forgiving self!
Arraigning always for another's fault
Thy dove-like nature — I, alas! have heired
The fiery rashness of my father's spirit —
Our gentle mother bequeathed hers to thee.

Soph. Come, dearest! be composed — no more
of this —
Not if you love me. — Let me tempt you forth
Into the garden. with the balmy air
To inhale (as 'twere) calm thoughts — There's not,
methinks,
A more reviving córdial, for a sick
And harassed spirit, than the sight of Nature:
Her rural aspect of untroubled beauty,
The holy music of her eloquent voice,
Whispering in every breeze. Come, Helen, dear!
To our own seat beneath the twin Acacias —
Thou can'st refuse me nothing in their shade,
For they were planted by our infant hands,
And our dear mother christened them the sisters —
And bade us grow like those young trees together,
Pure as their snowy blossoms — in our hearts
United like their interwoven boughs. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Evening. A room opening to a garden by a glass door. Writing materials, and a folded letter lying on a table. Helena and Sophia sitting together on a sofa near the open glass door.

Soph. That's my best sister! then you've sent your answer?

Hel. More than an hour ago — I almost wonder
It has not brought him yet — He thinks, perhaps,
'Twould compromise his dignity to appear
At the first summons.

Soph. Probable conjecture!
He who went hence some three, four hours ago
In such a state of pitiable distress!
Who penned in agony of heart that note

Imploring you to see him once again,
Before he left this place and you for ever!

Hel. Aye, at some journey, some immediate journey
He hinted in his note — I wonder whither?

Soph. His man, who brought the note, told ours his master
Had given him orders to have all prepared
For sudden, it might be, this night's, departure.

Hel. Perhaps he went before my answer reached him?

Soph. Nay, dear! he would not go without his servant —
It does my heart good, but to guess the feelings
With which he read your answer — that reprieve
From death to life.

Hel. And yet, I hope, Sophia!
I did not write as if I cared too much —
As if — as if —

Soph. Nay, Helena! fear nothing —
Put not the galling curb of pride, my sister!
Upon the gen'rous warmth of virtuous feeling.
There *are* occasions (this, I think, is one,
Noble forgiveness of repented error,)
When it is beautiful to see the heart
Burst those unmeaning, selfish, cold restraints,
Called in the jargon of a heartless world,
Prudent reserve — décorum — proper pride.

Hel. But yet he comes not, and its getting late:
'Tis a dark evening — there's a storm abroad —
Hark! — that was thunder.

Soph. Yes — the clouds all day
Have been assembling, and it seemed at sunset
As if the lightnings (ready to dart out)
Glared with red wrath behind their volumed darkness.

Hel. And Hargrave has a mile to walk — I wish
He may escape the storm.

Soph. He will not heed it —
Who thinks of storms with sunshine in the heart?

Hel. There! — what a flash! — that was forked lightning, sister —

* * * * * * * * *

Perhaps he'll come, as is his custom often,
Straight through the garden to this door —

Soph. Perhaps —
But if he does, we scarcely shall discern him
('Tis grown so dark) till he is close at hand.

* * * * * * * * *

What massy blackness shrouds the clust'ring shapes
Of those tall evergreens! That forward group —
What gloomy, tomb-like shadows it flings down!

Hel. One moved, methought — there! — do you see it move?

Soph. 'Tis the long tremulous shade of yonder cypress
Waving across the path.

Hel. What stirred its top?
There's not a breath of air.

Soph. Some sudden puff,
Gone in a moment: — often before thunder
There are such stifled gaspings, as if nature
Struggled for breath — and hark! the shiv'ring leaves
(With agitated consciousness, 'twould seem,)
Announce the coming tempest — there it rolls —
But very distant.

Hel. But 'twill soon be here,
And Hargrave's road leads through that very hollow,
Where the young sycamore was struck by lightning
In the last storm.

Soph. But Hargrave will not stop
On his road here, on such an errand too,
To take the dang'rous shelter of the trees —
Besides — he'll reach us long before the storm —
We'll shut it out — I'll ring for lights —

Hel. No, no,
Not for the world — I always loved, you know,
To watch the awful working of the heavens
On such an evening — at what hour d' you think
'as his note dated? 'tis too dark to see —

[*Helena goes towards the writing table, takes up the folded letter, and utters a cry of surprise.*]

Hel. What have I done! oh, God! I've sent the wrong ——

Soph. (*Running to her.*) Dear sister?

Hel. His *own letter* I've sent back —
Here's mine sealed up — send some one off — fly — fly,
But 'tis too late — he's gone! he's gone already!
And I ——

[*The report of a pistol heard from the garden. Helena screams and runs out, followed by her sister.*]

Scene changes to the garden.

[*A dim light — tall trees on every side. A walk skirted on one side by a sloping grass bank, topped with dark evergreens. Hargrave on the ground leaning against the bank, his head resting on Helena's shoulder, who is kneeling by him. A pistol lies on the walk. Female servants. Sophia giving hurried orders to a male domestic.*]

Soph. Fly — 'tis for life and death! — and bring
him with you —
Begone like lightning —
Har. Too, too late, kind sister,
Before he comes — Oh, Helen! I've obeyed thee —
Helen! I go for ever —
Hel. Hargrave! Hargrave!
Kill me — thy words will do it.
Soph. Wretched man!
Rash, rash, mistaken man! what hast thou done?
She had recalled thee with forgiving love —

Had writ the kindest answer! — but in error,
(Oh, fatal error!) sent back thine own letter
In lieu of hers.

Har. Recalled me! Helen! love!
Bless thee for that — but, oh! my frantic haste!
The sight of mine own letter — my last hope
Contemptuously returned — it drove me mad!
It drove me — but — perhaps — I may not die —
The wound may not be mortal — Oh! I feel
That I would give for one poor year of life
More than — Oh, Helena!

Hel. Thou shalt not die!
Is there no help? You all stand gazing there,
And none of you — what's this? oh, God! oh, God!
My bosom's wet with blood! *his* blood! his blood
Will no one stir for help? he'll bleed to death.

Har. Aye, aye, 'tis death! — I called, and he is come —
And thou forgavest me — and all might yet
But for mine own rash folly have been well —

Yet — let me hear it once from thine own lips —
My Helen! — thou forgivest?

Hel. Hear him! hear him! —
He mocks me with his dying breath — he sues
In bitter irony to *me* for pardon —
Oh, cruel! — *my* forgiveness — and I've killed him

Har. Oh, no! oh, no! — thou'rt blameless — I alone
Was guilty from the first — my only love!
Mine, mine in death! — Oh! comfort her, Sophia!
Don't tell my mother how her son — Oh, God!
My poor fond mother!

Hel. What's her grief to mine?
She's not thy murd'ress — never steeled her heart
As I did mine against thy prayers — break, heart!
Proud, sinful heart! break, break, and pay for ——

Har. She faints — or art thou gone before, my Helen!
To await me — where? There is no place in Heav'n

For the lost wretch — Heav'n shuts her gates against me,

I see the flaming sword — it flashes — there! —

[*Lightning.*

Soph. Oh, Hargrave — God is pleased to give thee time —

Time to repent — lift up thine heart in prayer —

His mercy's infinite.

[*A crash of thunder over head.*

Har. Lo! there, His voice! —

Is that a call to judgment? Mercy, Jesu! —

[*Dies.*

EDITHA:

A

DRAMATIC SKETCH.

CHARACTERS.

Mr. MELMOTH.

EDMUND.

PHYSICIAN.

EDITHA, *daughter to Mr. Melmoth.*

FLORA.

MARTHA, *an old servant.*

EDITHA.

SCENE I.

A parlour in Mr. Melmoth's house.

TIME — *morning.*

[Mr. MELMOTH *alone. Walks about the room in great agitation, stopping every now and then as if to listen.*]

How long he stays! — And yet, I fear, I fear
His coming will but crush the last fond hope
I weakly cling to — feeble, faint indeed,
But still — 'tis hope! — Hark! — 'twas her cham-
ber-door
That opened then — I hear a step — 'tis his —

Enter PHYSICIAN.

Mr. M. Well, Doctor! well, my friend! you're come at last!
You've seen your patient? — I expect to hear
Good tidings of her. — You shall tell them me
In a few moments — now, you look fatigued
With your long walk — you found her better, though?
But you shall tell me presently. — I'll ring
For some refreshment.

Phy. None, my friend, for me —
I am not weary, but ——

Mr. M. This sultry day
Oppresses you — *She* feels it dreadfully!
But so do I and ev'ry one — I think —
If she can bear the voyage.—

Phy. She *cannot* bear it —
Rest and quiet now.

Mr. M. You're of opinion, then,
Twere best defer it till ——

Phy. Alas, my friend! —
Your child will never — What a task is mine!

Mr. M. (*After a pause.*) Why, speak it out —
for I have felt it long —
Have known and felt it — yet — this old weak heart!
And must I lay my darling in the grave?
My last surviving child! — God's will be done.

Phy. May He sustain you, my unhappy friend,
Through this great trial — her, He takes away
By such a merciful summons! — 'tis, in truth,
A Father's loving call to a dear child —
So mild! so gentle!

Mr. M. I can bear it now — .
I can bear *all* the truth — I pray you, therefore,
Tell me as near as you can calculate —
(With a friend's frankness, I beseech you, tell me,)
How long my Editha has yet to live.

Phy. 'Tis hard to say — her malady is such —
So ling'ring, so illusive, it defies
All human calculation to assign

The probable period of its fatal triumph —
These sultry days, and more oppressive nights
Try her severely — should these heats continue. —
But she is strong — the principle of life
Is strong within her yet — if she survive
The falling leaf, she may — 'tis like she will
Live thro' the winter: but when Spring returns ——

Mr. M. Aye, she was born in Spring, the 10th of April:

Therefore, of all the year, I've ever loved
That season, and that month, that gave her to me:
My dutiful, affectionate, good child!
And I shall lay my blossom in the earth
When the first flowers — her own sweet fav'rite flowers,
Wake from their wintry death. — Poor Edmund Wilmot!
Thou art returning full of joy and hope
To claim thy bride

Phy. Indeed! do you expect him?

Mr. M. With the next India ships, and ev'ry day
The fleet is looked for — the next hour perhaps
May bring him here. You must remember Edmund;
My sister's orphan boy? I took him home,
After his parent's death, and reared him up
With my own children, till the eldest two
Fell victims to this fatal malady,
Following, within three years, their mother's path
To the same grave. My little Editha
Became my only earthly comfort then,
With this dear boy. — She was his darling too,
His charge, his plaything — he watched over her
With all an elder brother's tender care,
Oft calling her, in sport, his little wife.
No wonder as she grew to womanhood,
That their young hearts were woven into one,
And the boy's jesting claims assumed, e'er long,
The pleading earnestness of serious hope.
He knew my heart, he knew its warmest wish

Was to behold my Editha his wife;
But she was portionless, and he too poor
To think of marriage for some years at least.
A good appointment offered in the East,
And full of hope, and full of his return
With golden fruits of a few bustling years,
Edmund accepted it, and partèd from us.
More than fulfilled his sanguine hopes have been;
And he returns at last to claim his bride,
Whose image has been with him (so he writes)
In all his sad and solitary hours,
In times of disappointment and distress,
Peril and sickness; like a smiling angel,
Cheering his heart, with looks of peace and love.
He comes, poor youth! with all these flushing hopes,
And I must tell him — Oh! my friend, 'tis hard
To stab with such a welcome the young heart
That meets one in the glow of expectation.

Phy. 'Tis hard, indeed! too painfully I've learnt
From sad experience, how to feel for you.

Will you walk with me on my homeward way?
My time is portioned.

Mr. M. The more readily
That I'm expecting ev'ry hour and minute
Th' approach of Edmund by that very road,
And I would meet the trial, that must come.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A lady's dressing-room, with windows opening down to a small lawn. — A large Indian screen drawn before the door. — Editha lying on a couch. — Flora working at a table near her.

Edi. Come, little cousin! leave that moping work,
And this close room; for the fresh open air,
And that sweet garden where I long to be.
There! Zoe's bark invites you to a race —
See! where she waits upon the gravel walk.

Flo. And she must wait awhile, dear Editha!
Look! I've but half a leaf t' embroider now,
And this whole sprig is finished. Let me see —
One, two, three, four.

Edi. What! counting them again?
Well, Flora! has the number much decreased
Since yesterday?

Flo. Now, cousin Editha!
You know how I do long to get the gown
Finished in time — and 'twill be wanted soon —
Aye, cousin Edith! you may shake your head.
But you smile, tho', and I know well enough
It will be wanted, very, very soon;
And I should break my heart I do believe
If this were not be your wedding gown. —
Remember! I'm to be your bridesmaid, cousin.

Edi. But where's the bridegroom, Flora? — We must wait,
Must we not, little Coz, till Edmund comes?

Flo. He'll soon be here — I know the fleet's expected —
He may be here to-day — this very day!
And tho' you look so sly, you think so too;
For ev'ry time the sound of wheels is heard,
Or horses' hoofs, I see you tremble, Coz,
And the bright colour of your cheek spreads out
Over your face and neck. Oh! and besides,
I know what Ursula said yesterday,
When Martha asked her questions about you.

Edi. What, silly child! you don't believe I hope
In fortune-telling stories?

Flo. N—o — not *quite*: —
But Urs'la *is* a very cunning woman,
And often guesses right. — You'll *own* that. —

Edi. Well,
What said the cunning woman about me,
And what did Martha ask?

Flo. *She* spoke so low,
I could not hear her question, but I guessed it

By Ursula's reply. — I heard *that* plain —
She said we soon should follow you to church.

Edi. To church! is that your cunning woman's guess?
Why, Flora! is it only to be married,
Only for weddings, people go to church?
The dead are carried there.

Flo. Aye, so they are,
And little babies to be christened too,
And we all go on Sundays. — But *you* know,
Ah! you know well enough, what Urs'la meant.
Cousin! do you remember Amy Lee?

Edi. Oh! very well: — that delicate, fair girl,
She who was married, — last July, I think, —
To the young sailor.

Flo. Just the very same.
Now you shall hear a ballad Amy made,
When she expected Maurice home from sea,
Listen —

FLORA *sings.*

The young leaves are budding
On ev'ry green tree;
The spring flowers are studding
Bank, meadow, and lea:
The small birds are singing,
The winter is past:
The fleet winds are bringing
My true love at last.

The hawthorn in flower 's
A fair thing to see;
A stately green tower,
The sycamore tree:
The sun shines above,
Great, and glorious is he!
But the sight of my love
Is more gladsome to me.

The horn from the mountain
Sounds mellow and clear:
The gush of the fountain
Is pleasant to hear:
Sweet and soft is the call
Of the nest-brooding dove;
But sweetest of all,
The kind voice of my love.

The roses are blowing,
Their buds are half blown;
The lilies are growing,
Their stalks are half grown:
But before one shall wither,
On stalk or on tree,
My love will come hither
To wreathe them for me.

Edi. Well, well, you little cunning harmonist!
I can apply the words of Amy's ballad,
And you shall teach it me, some day or other,
When I can sing again. I'll promise, too,
When Edmund comes, and Flora's gown is finished,
I'll wear no other on my wedding day.
Now get you gone, my merry little nurse!
I'm faint with talking, and if Martha comes,
She'll scold us both. My eyes are heavy, too,
And I shall sleep perhaps.

Flo. Farewell, dear Coz!
I'll bring you flowers, a large, sweet basket full.

[*Exit* FLORA.

Edi. I am a happy creature! none I'm sure
Had ever friends so loving and so kind
As I am blest with; — but of all, methinks,
The prattle of that dear light-hearted child
I most delight in — 'tis so full of hope,
And joyous certainty. — All eyes but hers
Look on me with a sort of tender pity,

As if some dark cloud of impending woe
Were hanging over me. This morning only,
My father sat there, reading to himself,
(*Seeming* to read,) but all the while his eyes,
Not on the book, but on my face were fixed,
And they were full of tears: — a sudden fear
Of some disastrous tidings stopt my breath,
And I could hardly utter Edmund's name —
But 'twas a groundless fear — allayed as soon
By my dear father's calm assurances —
He *must* come soon — "he *may* be here to-day" —
So Flora said. This restless expectation
It is that keeps me from regaining strength,
I feel I shall be well, when he is come.
Sleep! thou hast fled my pillow many a night,
Come, visit me, sweet sleep! with happy dreams.

[*Scene closes.*

SCENE III.

The same apartment.

Editha sleeping. — Martha sitting by her.

Edi. (*awaking*)

Martha! dear Martha! are you watching there?
Have I slept long?

Mar. Aye, dearest! long and sweetly —
Two hours, and more; and here, I've brought you now
Your jelly and some fruit. Will you sit up?

Edi. How strange this weakness is, when I've no pain,
And am so nearly well! You have resumed
Your former office — the kind cares, dear Martha,
With which you nursed me up, when I was left
A motherless infant to your faithful love.

You lift me now as easily, methinks,
(I'm sure as tenderly,) as you did then.
But I'll get well, and pay you with *such* love!
And Edmund!—don't you long to see him, Martha?

Mar. With all my heart, God bless him! — next yourself,
I never loved a child like Master Edmund.
He was the noblest boy! — he had a spirit
As brave as a young lion! yet as mild
And patient as a lamb; — and I could trust him,
To nurse and fondle you for hours together,
When he was scarcely higher than my knee,
And you, a little babe.

Edi. My dear, kind cousin!
How gentle, and how patient, he was with me;
And yet I teased him so! and hurt him once.
Do you remember, Martha! when I struck him
In sudden passion with the little rake,
And the sharp teeth went deep into his hand
And made it bleed? I never shall forget

The agony, the horror of remorse
That wrung me, when I saw the blood start out,
And his pale face. But he concealed the pain,
And soothed me, kissed me, wiped away my tears,
As if himself had been th'offending one,
And I the injured. What o'clock is't Martha?

Mar. Past three — a quarter past: you've slept since one.

Edi. Oh! I forgot to tell you of my dream —
The thought of Edmund put it from my mind,
Yet 'twas a strange one — hardly like a dream,
There was such method in it. — Well, methought
My mother, (just as you've described her to me,)
With her meek eyes, and tender, pensive smile,
Came gliding like a moon-beam, (whence I know not,)
And stood beside my bed. I knew directly
It was my mother's spirit I beheld,
And yet I looked up in her face as calmly
As I now look in yours — without surprise

Or fearful awe; and when she beckoned me,
I rose and followed, borne along, methought,
With a sweet pleasant motion — not compulsive,
And yet without exertion of my own
Of foot or limb — skimming along the ground
As noiseless as a shadow — we went down
Into the garden, up the lime-tree walk,
And out into the lane, that leads, you know,
Straight to the church-yard: — it was night, methought,
And the moon shone so bright! and on the grass
The tomb-stones flung such long, black shadows down!
Yet, as the spirit glided on before me,
The moon-beams glimmered thro' its vap'ry form —
The church-door opened when we came to it,
And we went in, and up the northern aisle,
To the flat stone that marks our burial vault —
The stone half-raised, disclosed a narrow stair,
That led below And when the spirit stopt

At the pit's mouth, and looking back, made sign
I should precede her, down the dark descent;
Without a feeling of reluctant horror,
I stooped, and entered in: — she followed me,
And then I heard the heavy stone fall down
Into its place — and all was dark a moment —
Only a moment, for a pale white light,
A hazy lightness, dawned through the thick gloom,
And soon distinctly shewed the dismal chamber,
And all within it. There were many coffins;
Some all decayed, and with the lids sunk in,
And dropping into dust; and other some,
Of fresher date, but the brass nails and plates
Were green with damp. On one of these I read
The name of "Julia Melmoth" — my dear mother's!
My sister Jane's was graven on a second;
And on a third, my little brother Henry's;
And then I saw a fourth beside these three,
An empty, new-made coffin, with the lid
Lying half off. I had forgotten then

(Such inconsistent wildness have our dreams)
How I came there, by whom accompanied:
But when I raised my eyes, just opposite
The spirit stood; its mild, maternal gaze
Fixed on my face;— then first I heard its voice —
'Twas like the dying off of a faint breeze
On an Æolian harp. I rather *felt*
Than heard the words it uttered — they were these —
"Lie down, my child!" and to the empty coffin
The thin white finger pointed. I obeyed,
And stepping in, compos'd myself to rest
In that cold crib, as calmly as a child
Lays its soft cheek upon the cradle-pillow.
Then, stooping down, the spirit touch'd my forehead
With its pale lips. Oh! that strange kiss — it felt
Like the cold earthy damp that breathes upon one
From a fresh-opened vault. My heart shrunk up
As if a spear of ice had touched its core;
And then, the darkness of the coffin lid
Fell on me, and, like sparks quenched one by one,

My thoughts went out — perception died away,
And I dissolved into forgetfulness: —
And so I lay, (a sweet untroubled sleep
It was in fact, that ended thus my dream,)
Till, on awaking, I beheld you there
Sitting beside me. Martha! my dear Martha!
Your eyes are full of tears — you look upon me
As sorrowful as if I were indeed
Laid in the coffin. Sure you don't believe
In dreams and omens? — lying fancies all.
Why are you sad, dear Martha?

Mar. Not for that;
But I was thinking of your blessed mother —
You know I nursed her, dearest! till she died.

Edi. Ah! I do know it; — and you've ever been
To all of us a very faithful friend.
Dear Martha! was my mother's illness long?
She died of a consumption, did she not?

Mar. Oh! very, very long: — but, darling child!
It is not good to let your mind run all

On such sad thoughts.—Come, talk of something else.

Edi. Oh! but I love to talk about my mother—I'm like her too — my father often says so.

Mar. Aye, that you are—your very step is hers! It makes me start sometimes—your hand is shaped Exactly like your mother's — you've her way Of raising it up — so — to shade your eyes When you are thinking, and your upper lip, Just catches up as hers did, when she smiled, Showing the two front teeth.

Edi. My sister Jane And little Henry caught that fatal illness From my poor mother, and I've heard indeed It runs in families. Martha! do you know But for your tender watchfulness, I think, It might have fixed on me, when I received That sudden chill from being wet last winter; But your good nursing frightened off the foe; And now I'm getting well, so fast! so fast!

You'll see, when Edmund has been here a week,
I shall be strong enough to walk with him
To Urs'la's cottage: — that's two miles, you know:
How glad she'll be to see me there again!

Mar. Look at that madcap, Flora, in the garden.

Edi. Why, how she's bounding like an antelope
Over the flow'r beds, and across the green!
And see, she flings away in her wild haste
Basket and flowers — what can she see? — Oh,
Martha!

Mar. A butterfly, perhaps — that's quite enough,
To set her off. — Your father coming home —
Aye, that's the thing, she has caught sight of him
Returning up the lane.

Edi. Most like 'tis that,
But if the wind whisks by an idle straw
It startles me of late. Hark! — listen, Martha!

Mar. 'Tis only Zoe's bark, set on by Flora,
Fit playfellows those two! a well matched pair!

Edi. I hear my father's step: how slow he comes,
And stops, as if — speaking perhaps to Flora.

[*The door opens.* — *Mr. Melmoth comes round the screen towards Editha.* — *Edmund is just seen looking anxiously in at the half-open door.*]

Mr. M. How fares it now with my beloved child?

Edi. Well, dearest father! I've been so revived
By two hours of the sweetest sleep! Where's Flora?
How eagerly she ran just now to meet you!
It *was* to meet you, was it not?

Mr. M. Yes, love!
One of the lab'rers told her I was coming,
And that — and that there was a stranger with me.

Edi. A stranger! and she ran with that wild glee
To meet a stranger! Father! tell me all.

Mr. M. Well, my dear child — 'twas one with letters — news

Of ——

Edi. Edmund! Edmund! then the fleet's arrived!

But letters! — news! he would be here himself —

He *is* here — Father! tell it me at once.

Mr. M. Will you be calm, composed, my precious child!

Edi. I will, I shall be, when I know — oh, Father!

Tell me at once, — at once. ——

Edmund (*coming hastily forward, and catching her in his arms*) My Editha!

[*The scene closes.*

SCENE IV.

The next day. — Morning. — The garden.

MR. MELMOTH. EDMUND.

Mr. M. Oh, Edmund! I *have* hoped till hope was madness!

Edm. It is not madness. You despair too soon,
Dear sir! That man is not infallible.
How dares he set a term upon her life,
Her precious life! But you'll have more advice.
Others may think of something — "Live till Spring!"
Did he not say that she MIGHT live till Spring?
Oh, God! — and I have toil'd five years for this!

Mr. M. And I, my son! have toil'd thro' this hard world
Sixty-five years. I had a wife, three children,
Three beautiful children! the mother and her babes

(Our first-born two) were gathered to the grave
Within three years: — but I had still one left,
One precious lamb, to cherish in my bosom,
And be to me, wife! daughter! every *thing!*
I reared it up with fearful tenderness,
With love that never slumber'd, night or day.
It grew and flourished; and I thought at last
The thunder-cloud had spent its deadly bolts:
But just as I began to feel secure
The trial came. God sends to claim my lamb.
And shall I answer — "Lord! the lamb is mine,
I will not part with it." — Or shall I say,
"Lord! wherefore didst thou give the lamb to me,
If 'tis thy pleasure now to take it back?"
Shall I say thus, my son?

Edm. My more than father!
My Editha's father! I should comfort *you.*
And the meek patience of your sacred sorrow
Upbraids my wild, ungovernable grief:

And yet, my father, yet, I think — I hope —
While there is life, there's hope! —

Mr. M. There is, my son
And ev'ry thing is possible to God —
He may be gracious to the humble hope
That questions not his justice in the issue.
She bore the meeting yesterday much better
Than I had dared to hope.

Edm. And Martha says,
There was less fev'rish restlessness about her
Last night than there has been for many nights:
And she's so well this morning! and so cheerful!
She sent me for this rose to her own garden.
Oh! that thou wert the rose of eastern fable,
Whose perfumed breath restores the sick to health!

[*Exit* EDMUND.

Mr. M. (*slowly following him*) Youth! sanguine
youth! — how many floods of tears
Must fall before thy ardent hopes are quenched!

[*Exit.*

SCENE V.

Editha's dressing room. — Evening.

[*Editha on the couch. — Edmund laying down a book, from which he had been reading to her.*

Edm. Shall I leave off, my Editha? — You're
tired —
The book has wearied your attention, love!
Edi. No, Edmund! but my mind had wandered
from it
To you, and to myself — to many things. —
I heard the words you uttered — not their sense —
Dear Edmund! I'm too happy for attention —
My heart's too full — full of the past and present.
Edm. And of the future, love! the happier
future!
Is there no room for that, my Editha?

Edi. Oh ! yes — there has been, and will be again ;

But now, I'm almost sick with happiness ;
I feel as if I could not bear the weight
Of half another grain. — And *you are here !*
And have been here since yesterday at noon !
Have slept again under this very roof !
Have sat at meals in your old place again !
Have walked in our own garden — yours and mine —
Have brought me flowers from thence — this very rose !
Your old accustomed tribute. — You are here
And will be here to-morrow, and to-morrow,
And all this happiness is *not* a dream !

Edm. A blest reality, beloved creature !
That time will stamp with still increasing bliss.
Oh, Editha ! how much I have to tell you —
How much to hear, when you are well enough
To stroll once more in our old fav'rite haunts,
Your arm within my arm ! till then, dear love,

I will not enter them. Is the old tree,
The oak-tree, standing yet, whose hollow trunk
We used to call our house, when we were children?

Edi. Standing, and well — but the wild honey-suckle
You taught to climb its branches is quite dead;
Yet not for want of care, but we believed
The lightning struck it. Do you remember, Edmund,
That little mountain-ash you planted for me
The day of your departure?

Edm. Oh, yes! yes!
I set it by the meadow-brook, and bade you,
If the tree grew and prospered, look upon it
As a good omen of the wand'rer's fate.

Edi. And it has grown and prospered; it is now
A stately tree, casting its chequered shadow
To the opposite margin of the meadow brook;
Hung ev'ry autumn with such beautiful tassels
Of scarlet berries! I grudged them to the birds.

Edm. Not to *our* robin?—but he must be dead!

Edi. I found him dead last winter in the green-house,
In the hard frost. Look, Edmund! oh, look there!
The moon's at full to-night, and she is rising;
Help me to reach the sofa by the window,
That I may gaze on the full moon once more.

Edm. "*Once more,*" my life!—shall we not often thus
Together look upon the lovely moon?

Edi. I hope so, Edmund. Did I say once more?—
Oh, often! often! I believe—I hope—

* * * * * * * *

I've heard 'tis wrong to be afraid of death.
I know we should not love this world too much;
And yet, I feel that I do love the world—
This beautiful world! with all its fruits and flowers,
Its dews and sunshine. And with those about me,

In whom I live — you and my father, Edmund —
Is not this paradise! — I feel, I fear,
I could not bear to die and leave it all! —

* * * * * * * *

Yet surely, surely, in a future state
There may be pleasures perfected from those
That constitute our best enjoyments here —
The innocent affections of the heart —
Edmund! — — —

Edm. My dearest! you exhaust yourself —
I must not let you talk so much. — Come, come,
Martha has charged me to take absolute rule,
As in old times, over my little cousin.

Edi. She makes me keep good hours — I go to bed
At nine o'clock, so if I'm tir'd to-night
I shall but sleep the sounder. What's the hour?

Edm. The church clock answers you: 'tis striking nine.

Edi. See! the bright moon is just withdrawing there
Behind the steeple. Now — how dark it is!

Edm. Still light as day, love! tho' the moon is hid.

Edi. No, very dark — pitch dark. Where are you, Edmund?
Don't let me go — don't leave me —
Edmund! —

[*Dies.*

THE END.

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